A Child of Glee and How She Saved The Queen

by

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A CHILD OF GLEE

Books for Children

BY

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BETTY, A BUTTERFLY
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ROBIN'S RECRUIT
PENELOPE PRIG, AND OTHER STORIES
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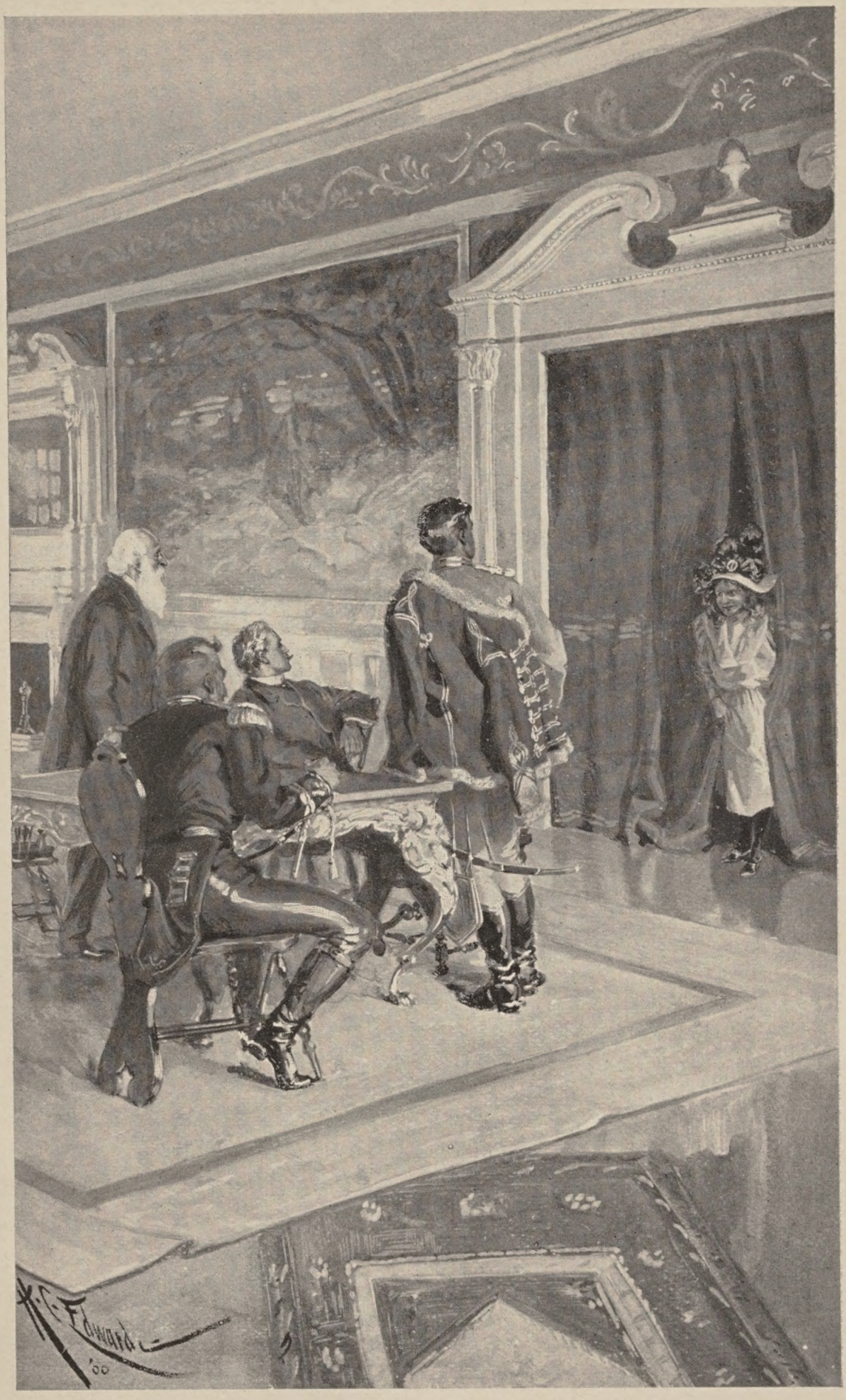

"'I AM NOT THE QUEEN OF AVARIL.'"

A CHILD OF GLEE

And How She Saved the Queen

By

A. G. PLYMPTON

AUTHOR OF "DEAR DAUGHTER DOROTHY," "BETTY, A BUTTERFLY," "A FLOWER OF THE WILDERNESS," ETC.

Illustrated by

HARRY C. EDWARDS

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FROM DRAWINGS BY HARRY C. EDWARDS

"'I am not the Queen of Avaril'" . . . *Frontispiece*

"'The cry of "Long live the Queen!" rang through the streets of Marll'". . . . *Facing page* 45

"With one frantic effort he snapped the leash" . . . . . " " 65

"'Hush!' whispered Margaretta. 'Is not some one coming?'" . . . . . " " 94

"'Beware, beware of St. Margaret's Day, your day of birth!'" . . . . . " " 180

"'Quick!' she said. 'They are government troops in search of Your Grace'" . . " " 260

A Child of Glee

CHAPTER I

THEY had been travelling from London to —— in the same railway carriage, and the unsociable-man-in-the-corner had hardly taken his eyes from Marjorie all the way. As to that, few persons could help watching Marjorie when she was in the mood to make merry, for at such times she was a most diverting little person. She had such droll ways, such a zest in life, such a sense of the ludicrous and such good humor as made her the ideal travelling companion. Hers was an exceedingly sociable disposition, and the trustful advances she made to high and low alike were no more to be repulsed than those of some dear friendly doggie. She was clever, too, in her way, could

sing, dance, recite, and as she had lived in many different countries was, for a child, no mean linguist. But had she spoken no language save her own, she could make herself understood anywhere by pantomime, for which she had a marvellous gift, and this she used with such drollery, such grace, such self-unconsciousness that she was simply irresistible. The play of her face, the quick motions of her hands, the expressiveness of her whole body made her, as was often said, a whole theatrical entertainment in herself. To mimic was as natural to her as to breathe, and fortunate it was that her heart was so warm and her imagination so quick to divine the feelings of others, or she would have dealt many a cruel wound in this way. Droll as her mimicry was, she was never so funny as when mimicking herself, which she often did, but the fun in this case was in her total want of success.

Marjorie had a passion for travel, and as the train started her spirits rose, getting higher

and higher with each mile. Never for a moment was she at a loss for amusement, for when the varied scenery visible from the car-window began to pall, and when she was convinced that her father wished to read his papers and that their fellow-traveller did not care to be sociable, she proved to be abundantly able to entertain herself. First she constructed out of her pocket-handkerchief two figures which she called Fraulein Schmidt and Mademoiselle François, and carried on a dialogue between them in broken English, the German lady's English and the English of the French lady being perfectly distinct. The dialogue began in a lively squabble by these imaginary ladies over their seats in the railway carriage, and ended in absurd sentimental expressions of friendship and regard.

Just at the last moment before the train started in London, an old lady had arrived, and before taking her seat in the car had, to the great amusement of the bystanders, insisted upon giving minute instructions upon

the care of a pet poodle to a person evidently to be left in charge. When tired of Fraulein Schmidt and her French friend, Marjorie suddenly assumed the very look of this old lady; by some miracle, too, her voice had the same anxious wheeziness in it, and so perfectly she impersonated her that the unsociable-man-in-the-corner almost laughed outright, only saving himself by a violent fit of coughing.

The man-in-the-corner, together with Marjorie and her father, were the sole occupants of the railway carriage. When the train reached ——, the latter brought Marjorie a sandwich and a cup of cambric tea. At the appearance of the tea the anxious old lady disappeared, and in her place was a brisk, breezy person, who sat erect and looked about her with bright and snapping eyes, as different as possible from the dull, heavy-lidded ones of the other.

"Well, I declare, Mr. Westbrook, if you ain't thoughtful," she said, holding out her hand for the cup; "that tea is just what I 've been cravin'."

"Will you have a sandwich, Mis' Pond?" asked the father, evidently at once recognizing the subject of Marjorie's mimicry.

"Well, I dunno but what I will."

She began to sip the tea in a deliberate way, as if it were too great an enjoyment to be hurried, the very embodiment of a New England countrywoman, and unspeakably funny to one familiar with the type.

"It 's been on my mind for quite a spell," she said, as she surveyed the sandwich, "that I 'd ought git off at these railway stations an' give the folks an idee of how bread should be made. I reckon their trouble is with the raisin'."

"Well, there 's not time to get off at this one, for the train is just about to move on," continued the gentleman addressed, holding out his hand for the plate and the teacup, cutting this little comedy short.

Accordingly, Marjorie took the rest of the tea at a swallow, finished her sandwich "like a boy coming home hungry from school," and professed herself quite refreshed.

When Mr. Westbrook returned to his place in the carriage, he folded up his newspapers and turned to his daughter and comrade.

The man-in-the-corner, with his head against the cushion, his hat over his eyes, was apparently fast asleep, placing therefore no check upon their merriment. So they pleased themselves with tales and talk seasoned with many a jest, and Marjorie sang. She had a free, boyish voice that now and then had a note in it which went to the heart, and this it was perhaps that finally melted the reserve of the man-in-the-corner, for just as she finished he suddenly leaned toward her and said: —

"Mademoiselle goes to Avaril to witness the coronation of the little queen. Is it not so?"

"Truly, monsieur," she answered; "for what else would one possibly go to Avaril? Do you not go there for the same reason?"

Her father laid his hand upon her arm with a warning pressure, and turned to the man-in-the-corner with a glance that begged indulgence for his daughter's curiosity.

"The little mademoiselle is quite right. I also go to witness the coronation of the queen," he answered, but not without a slight hesitation that they afterwards remembered. "It will be well worth the trip, no doubt."

"Yes, it will be a fine show for a little Yankee to see. We are Americans, monsieur," Mr. Westbrook explained, somewhat unnecessarily, "and my daughter has a profound interest in royal personages; above all in this child-queen of Avaril who is to be crowned to-morrow."

"But, yes, crowned at the age of ten," said the man-in-the-corner.

"Ten years, eleven months and three days," murmured the little American, adding: "The queen's birthday, monsieur, is the same as my own, and what is very odd is the fact that we have the same name as well."

"Then my charming young travelling companion is 'Margaretta Christina Alexandre Beatrice of Avaril and the High Provinces.'"

The little American made a slight grimace,

which was charming, though by no means queenly.

"Your young travelling companion, monsieur, is Marjorie Westbrook, of Biddeford, Maine, United States, you know." She laughed, looked at him out of the corners of her eyes, as if to see how her confession would affect him, and added: "I'm called *Peg* at home."

"Did no one ever tell you, mademoiselle, that there is a striking resemblance between you and the little queen of Avaril?" said the man-in-the-corner.

The expressive face of Miss Westbrook, of Biddeford, betrayed the little girl's pleasure.

"Why, yes, monsieur," she answered; "it was but this very morning that papa showed me a likeness of Queen Margaretta that he said might have been taken for his precious Peg. Here it is."

She passed him a newspaper with a description of the little queen, and of the grand and impressive ceremonies with which she was to

be crowned. At the top of the sheet was the portrait to which Marjorie alluded, — the portrait of a little girl with wistful eyes and a mouth that bespoke in its quiet lines a power of affection and a need to be beloved. It was but a common newspaper cut, but it gave much of the simple dignity and loveliness of her who was to be crowned the day following.

"Saprimento," cried the man-in-the-corner, turning to Mr. Westbrook. "Your daughter has a most marvellous gift of expression. Yet there is much real resemblance between her and the young queen, shape of face, and features and color, all so much alike that when mademoiselle here becomes serious, the likeness is complete."

Marjorie leaned back in her place with blissful content, gazing in silence at the scenes through which the train swiftly passed. But after a few moments' silence, and as if he were impelled to speak, the man-in-the-corner again leaned forward and addressed her.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "would you like to stand in the place of Margaretta to-morrow? Would you like to wear a crown?"

Marjorie turned her head and nodded.

"Like to wear a crown?" she repeated. "Well, I should say so. Papa often tells me that every American woman is a queen, and every American child is a prince or a princess, but, dear me, what is it to be a princess of *Biddeford?* A princess without any power or any crown, or coronations or anything that's lovely and romantic. Why, monsieur, I have to travel over a thousand miles even to *see* a king or queen."

"But you have a potentate of some kind in your country,—a president, for instance."

"Oh, yes," answered Marjorie, "an ugly little man in ugly black clothes, without any throne to sit on, and nobody minds about him very much, because in four years he goes out and somebody else is 'It.'"

"Usually a very estimable person, however," said Mr. Westbrook, laughing, "who repre-

sents our good old Uncle Sam. But my daughter is not patriotic. She thinks Uncle Sam is not handsome, and his lean wrists and ankles offend her."

"Papa is always laughing at me because I like kings and palaces, and all that, better than a lot of presidents and ugly town halls, and mobs of people, who get red and thump their fists down on the table when they talk politics, and who won't be called subjects."

"But," said the stranger, smiling at her, "crowns are cumbersome ornaments, coronations mere shows, subjects sometimes plot treason, and power, that you spoke of just now as synonymous with kings and queens — poof!" The young man (by this time they saw he *was* young) made a graceful motion with his fingers in the air as of vanishing smoke. "Queen Margaretta's throne may crumble into dust any day, mademoiselle."

Marjorie turned from the man-in-the-corner and looked out again upon the landscape. She was dreadfully troubled, and the tears

sprang to her eyes in a sudden pity for this young queen, whose future was so uncertain. But in a moment she reassured herself.

"Oh, monsieur," she said, "I feel sure you are wrong. Who would plot against a poor little queen, only ten years, eleven months and three days? Every good, brave man in Avaril will defend her against her wicked enemies."

"My daughter is much distressed at the stories one hears of the trouble ahead for the child-queen in the pretensions of Duke Otto," said Mr. Westbrook. "What do you think of the situation, monsieur?"

"A strong man is needed upon the throne of Avaril, and many feel that the prosperity of the country justifies them in espousing the cause of the duke." The man-in-the-corner paused a moment and then added, with a sigh: "For myself, I would willingly leave the crown of Avaril upon the baby-brows 't will encircle to-morrow."

A sudden frown fell over the dark eyes of

the young man. He looked with an absent air out of the car-window, drumming with nervous fingers upon the casing. Presently, however, he looked again at the sparkling face of the little American.

"Dignity is a tiresome part to play, and by no means *your* rôle, my little marionette," he said. "Take my word for it, you would be bored to death in a week on a throne."

"Just what I tell her," said the father, looking at her bright face with that parental partiality which is a wise provision of Nature whereby the most uninteresting child is regarded by one pair of eyes at least with admiration. "Marjorie is made for comedy. She is a child of glee."

CHAPTER II

"YOU see, I never enjoyed fairy-stories as other children do, because of my Aunt Belinda," Marjorie explained to the now-very-sociable-man-in-the-corner. "It was not papa's fault," she went on, with an indulgent look at her parent, who was watching her out of laughing, half-closed black eyes. "He often used to beg her to leave me my — what were those things, papa, that you used to beg Aunt Belinda to leave me? Yes, *illusions*, that's it. But there's nothing Aunt Belinda despises as much as she does illusions. Santa Claus is an illusion, and so is William Tell, and the Pied Piper of Hamelin, and jolly Robin Hood, and she spoiled my pleasure in them all, because you know you must have (even if you won't own it) some scrap of a belief when you read of such things to enjoy them. And so I came to believe that any tale that was pretty and romantic

could not be true. But one day, monsieur, she was reading to me out of the history of England. It was about the little princes that were killed in the Tower: how their cruel Uncle Richard, pretending that the palace was n't safe, had the princes brought there, and then sent the Archbishop of Canterbury to Westminster Abbey, where the queen-mother had fled with her children for safety, to get the second son also; for if he should put both these little princes to death, he himself would be king of England. And the archbishop found the queen sitting upon the rushes, with her long fair hair streaming about her, and he took the boy away. Oh dear, oh dear! how sad was the poor queen's parting from the little prince!

"'Farewell, mine own sweet son,'" moaned Marjorie in the words of the unfortunate queen, assuming all at once an aspect of sorrow. "'Farewell, mine own sweet son. God send you good keeping! Let me kiss you once ere you go, for God knoweth when we shall kiss together again.'

"So then the second prince also is taken to the Tower," continued Marjorie in her own proper voice, and with all the gusto of the born story teller, "and there both of the poor boys were murdered by that bad, bad Richard, and their bones were found under a staircase at the Tower in London, two hundred years afterwards.

"When my Aunt Belinda had finished the story, I was crying to break my heart.

"'Is it not as interesting as any fairy tale?' she asked me, and I was forced to admit that it was.

"Yet, fancy the disgust of my wise aunt, monsieur, when I added, 'But you know there *are n't* any queens and princes nowadays, any more than there are fairies.'

"If I were such a little simpleton, I am sure it was *her* fault.

"Well, now I began to be dreadfully interested in history. I read every one in the old secretary at Westbrook Farm. *Read* them, did I say? I learned them by heart, poring over

them so much. And, dear me, how pleased I was that kings and queens and princesses are really-truly persons, though of course there was no more chance of seeing one in *Biddeford* than of seeing a fairy. It was not so long after this, however, when papa and I came over here, and I have seen nearly all there are in Europe."

"And do you find them so very different from the rest of us?" asked the man-in-the-corner, with much interest.

"Well, no," she admitted rather reluctantly. The similarity between royalty and the common herd must some time have forcibly impressed her, for presently she added in a confidential tone: "Do you know there is a little old lady in Biddeford who is as much like Queen Victoria as she can be? Of course she is not surrounded by — by — "

"Pomp and circumstance," suggested Mr. Westbrook.

"No, she is not surrounded by pomp and circumstance at all; she keeps a little thread-

and-needle shop, but she is a real lady for all that. Of course she has n't any court or any throne, or fine toilettes and ladies-in-waiting; but anyhow she is every bit as *dumpy*, and her cheeks flop in just the same way. Why, I 've seen princes, lots and lots of them, with not nearly so grand an air as either you or my papa have. In fact, I 've often thought that papa would look uncommonly well on a throne, in an ermine cape, you know, and big crown on his head. It 's a sad pity that he should have been born to an ulster and a derby hat, instead."

Her companions laughed at this sally, and Marjorie wound up her long argument at last by saying: —

"And so, monsieur, you see how I come to be so interested in royal persons. They take the place of fairies to me."

"Some of them are not very fairy-like," protested the man-in-the-corner; "for instance, that Richard of whom you spoke just now,— unless it be a malevolent fairy," he added.

"Yes," Marjorie assented, "*he* was what papa calls an out-and-out bad 'un; but in a story a downright wicked person is more interesting than a half-and-halfer, they do go ahead so. There was Henry the Eighth, too. Was n't he a case? He often reminds me of Aunt Belinda."

"Good heavens!" cried her father, aghast; "what a blood-thirsty character to give your aunt."

"I don't mean she beheads people," Marjorie assured the man-in-the-corner, "but she has just Henry's way of pushing things through. Charles the First is my favorite king, and I don't think any of the wicked ones so wicked as Oliver Cromwell. I despise above all things a person who schemes to get another person off his rightful throne and then gets on it himself."

"Truly it does give one an unamiable air, but perhaps he acted solely for the good of his country. Those were perilous times, and a resolute man alone could deliver England from the tyranny of the Stuarts."

"You ought to know Aunt Belinda, monsieur," cried Marjorie. "You would get on so well together, you two. She is always talking about the rights of the people and that sort of thing. Do you know any ladies from Biddeford, monsieur?"

Here Mr. Westbrook broke upon Marjorie's chatter with a great laugh, but the man-in-the-corner exclaimed: —

"Ah me, little mademoiselle, but once, crossing the English Channel, I did meet with the most charming lady from that very place. Her name I know not, alas!"

Immediately he became silent, as if lost in some pleasing recollection. The hat which long before he had pushed up from over his eyes was now removed altogether, and he leaned back with his eyes cast up to the ceiling of the railway carriage, as if he saw the lady from Biddeford there. It sounds foolish, but he really looked extremely handsome. Having for a moment regarded him with attention, Marjorie broke out: —

"Oh, monsieur, you say that I resemble the little Queen of Avaril; and I have just discovered that you look very much like papa."

The man-in-the-corner instantly put on his hat. He looked confused, and Mr. Westbrook said:—

"The resemblance goes no further, I think, than size, complexion and style of wearing one's moustache. My daughter has a talent for finding resemblances."

"Yes, but even without my talent," said Marjorie, innocently, "anybody would find this one."

"I shall take your word for it," said the young man, recovering his composure. "Your daughter is a very well instructed person," he added, turning to Mr. Westbrook. "I shall accept her conclusions. She has a vast fund of information."

Marjorie laughed. "I must tell what you say to Aunt Belinda, for *she* says that my education has been shamefully neglected. She was so worried about it that she has come

over here (she is in Paris now) to take me home to school. She says that I don't know anything but a few scraps of history and three languages, and that it's all very well *now*, but that when I'm older papa will be ashamed of me. If papa were to be ashamed of me," cried Marjorie, with a sudden drop in her voice and slipping her fingers into her father's hand, "I shouldn't wish to live any more, so I'm going back with her. Before we sail, as a last treat, papa is taking me to see the coronation of Margaretta. Then it's good-bye to all that's delightful, and behold me, monsieur, in Biddeford, with piles of books before me, an anxious frown on my forehead, and very likely an ache inside of it. Also an ambition satisfied with nothing short of an average of ninety-eight per cent."

"An average of ninety-eight per cent," repeated the man-in-the-corner, vaguely.

"Yes, on lessons, you know. I may even become a *learned person*, for that is what Aunt Belinda wants, and Aunt Belinda always

has what she sets out for. I do n't want to be a learned person at all, for I have always so much enjoyed being foolish and saying just what comes into my mind, whether it 's sensible or silly. But at all events," said Marjorie, brightening again after the momentary gloom, "I am going to see the little queen crowned at Avaril. *That* will be something to remember."

It was growing late. A dazzling sun was setting behind a range of hills, grandly beautiful in the misty tyrian purple tints of sunset. The green of the fields through which the train was speeding grew dusky, and still some hours must elapse before they would reach Marll, the capital of Avaril, where the ceremony of coronation was to take place.

Tired of her own chatter, Marjorie leaned her head against her father's shoulder and listened, until she fell asleep, to the conversation of her two companions.

The man-in-the-corner was interested in America, and took advantage of this opportunity to inform himself concerning it.

"Yours is a grand country," he said at last. "I would well like to visit it and see the wonders of its wild scenery, its great rivers and cataracts, its vast plains and forests. The descriptions I have read of Colorado, with the Garden of the Gods, so sublime, so tremendously imposing with its massive, natural spires and monuments, in particular, fascinated me. It must lead the mind back to shadowy, mythical ages, when the great Northern gods were supposed to play with the forces of nature and might here have built temples for themselves. I suppose you have seen these grotesque formations?"

"Well, no," answered Mr. Westbrook, moving a little uneasily in his seat. "To tell the truth, I have travelled very little in my own country."

"And then," continued the young man, "I would wish to see the great petrified forest, which covers, it is said, one hundred square miles. A friend of mine who has travelled in America tells me that it is the most won-

derful spectacle that he has ever beheld. He describes it as a very garden of rainbows. Some of the fallen trees or logs are perfectly transluscent, some transparent, or almost so, petrified to the core, and three or four feet in diameter. They show the most lovely shades of pink, purple, red, gray, blue and yellow. Some are pure amethyst, some like a topaz, while others are as white as marble. But pardon, monsieur; no doubt I weary you by a second-hand description of what you have had the pleasure of seeing with your own eyes."

"Well, no," Mr. Westbrook was forced to answer a second time. "I have never been as far west as Arizona."

"Let's go some time, papa," murmured Marjorie, half awake. "I never heard of any such place before."

"I am sure 't will be better worth seeing, little mademoiselle, than those royal personages that accident has placed upon thrones, and but remind you of humble persons you have left at home.

"Ah," said the young man, "my great passion is for travel. Nature planned me, monsieur, for an explorer. I love adventure, a free life with a spice of danger in it, and she has dropped me into a pint pot. Bah, that is Nature's way. After all her experience, she is still trying to fit square pegs into round holes. She bids her troubadour to sit quiet on a throne, and she says to the king she has made, 'Go forth, man, and sing and dance to amuse the people.' What do you make of it?"

Mr. Westbrook shrugged his shoulders, answering: —

"Perhaps because the king needs to learn something beside kingcraft, and the troubadour, beside singing. But 't is easy for me to philosophize, for Nature has made no mistake in my case."

"You are to be envied above mortals," said the young man, with a sigh, as he took up his book, which was, as Mr. Westbrook saw, "Through the Dark Continent." For some

time his companion watched the eager interest, which grew with the perusal, upon his handsome face. Then, drowsy with the monotonous clacking of the cars, Marjorie's papa joined her in the Land of Nod.

They slept the sound sleep of health and a good conscience, undisturbed even by the guard who came to the carriage at —— with a telegram for the man-in-the-corner.

This dispatch, whatever its import, put an end to his reading. He shut up his book, sat upright, staring into the darkness of the night, as if he expected to find there an answer to the question his necessities were urging upon him. In truth, the message he had just received had been one of warning, making some step on his part imperative. Search as he might, there was but one way by which he could save himself from the threatened danger.

He looked at his watch. It was eight o'clock. In half an hour they would arrive at Foss, the last stop before Marll. He must

decide before reaching Foss. At last when the train began to slow up, he took a card and some papers from his pocket, and with an attentive look at Marjorie and her father, slipped them into the pocket of Mr. Westbrook's overcoat as it lay on the seat beside him.

Neither of the two sleepers stirred.

He jammed his hat down over his eyes, put on his own overcoat, and when the train stopped, left the car.

His heart perhaps smote him for what he had done, but he shrugged his shoulders, with the assurance that he would be able to prevent any serious trouble, in consequence, befalling this gay pair.

CHAPTER III

WHEN Marjorie awoke, the twinkling lights of the gay capital of Avaril were to be seen from the car-window, and her father was already gathering together their bags and travelling shawls preparatory to leaving the train.

"Come, wake up, Peg, we are almost there, at Marll, you know, where you are to see the queen crowned," he said, encouragingly.

"I do n't want to see her crowned. I want to go to bed," murmured the ungrateful Marjorie, who was heavy with sleep, but immediately the stupor passed off, and she looked out of the car-window at the distant lights with all her wonted interest.

"Yes, papa, this must be Marll," she said, delightedly. "How bright the lights are, and see, there are rockets. They are beginning already to crown the queen. But, dear me,"

she interrupted herself, "*where's* the man-in-the-corner?"

"Probably got out at Foss."

"Well, I'm sorry. After the first, I thought he was very nice, and I was in hopes that we should see him to-morrow. I thought he was going to Marll. Seems to me he said so, papa."

"Well, my dear, I had that impression, but I can't be sure. As a rule, strangers are not so communicative as you are. Your Aunt Belinda would have been horrified if she had heard you chatter to this gentleman. Luckily I have no secrets or you would give me away."

This assertion much distressed Marjorie, who answered it with warmth.

"Do you think I am so mean and stupid as that? I didn't suppose that a person's destination was much of a secret, for even if you had no chattering daughter the *guard* would find it out."

Mr. Westbrook laughed. He shook Mar-

jorie into her coat, kissed her round cheek, and said, soothingly: —

"It was a joke, Peg. I know if I had a secret wild horses would not drag it out of you. But all the same, it's a deal more comfortable not to have any."

On reaching the station at Marll, Mr. Westbrook jumped out of the car, and Marjorie, with wide bright eyes and pink cheeks, followed him. At almost the same moment two gendarmes who had been standing by the guard stepped forward and detained the Americans.

An excited conversation ensued, for Mr. Westbrook spoke the language of the country with ease. The gendarmes, with much perplexity, looked from Mr. Westbrook to poor Marjorie, who was unable to determine who they were or what they wanted. It was easily guessed, however, that whatever their purpose, it was greatly displeasing to her papa.

At last he turned to Marjorie and hurriedly explained the situation.

"I have been mistaken for another person,"

he said, "and shall be obliged to go with these officers, but I hope to prove their error at once."

So it befell that our travellers made their entry into the town under the escort of two gendarmes.

In a short time they arrived at a building which in their own country would be called a police station, where Mr. Westbrook was searched, Marjorie sitting meantime on a bench in an outer room, where a man with a pair of sharp gray eyes and a grizzly beard was in charge. Now and then he looked furtively at the disconsolate-looking little figure, as if he were none too well pleased that it should be there, and Marjorie quite unjustly loathed him because of an impression that he was responsible for this disagreeable adventure.

When her father was brought back he gave her a glance of such smiling reassurance as to impress her with a belief that things had gone very ill with him.

This was quite true, for the papers which

the man in the corner of the railway carriage had put in Mr. Westbrook's pocket had been found, confirming such suspicions as led to his arrest. He was therefore to be detained until the matter could be thoroughly investigated.

As for his daughter, he was assured that she would be the charge of the government and properly cared for. Mr. Westbrook then asked for the privilege of speaking to her before they parted, which was readily given him.

He seated himself on the settee beside her, the grizzly-bearded man obligingly turned his back, and the two officers remained at a sufficient distance to give them a chance to speak privately.

"This is a very amusing adventure," began Mr. Westbrook, with a determined cheerfulness that did not in the least deceive the person for whose benefit it was assumed. "I've no doubt that by and by, when we have had time to forget the little annoyance it causes us, that we shall have many a good laugh over it. Fancy, Peggy dear, your very harmless parent being mistaken for a *conspirator*."

"Oh!" said Marjorie, with a gasp. "Ha, ha! how very funny! And what, then, will they do with you, and what will they do with *me?* Am I supposed to be a conspirator, too?"

"Oh, I do n't think they go as far as that," he told her, squeezing her little cold hands in his. "You will be comfortably cared for; I have been assured of it. But of course I shall be — er — detained by the authorities here for a day or two, until — "

"What a mean country!" interrupted Marjorie, in a voice intended to be overheard.

"Oh, hush, my dear!" he implored; "let us bear our trials with dignity."

"But I am so angry," she whispered back to him. "Beside, you know, the man-in-the-corner said that dignity is n't my rôle."

"He said a good many things probably that are false," replied her father, savagely biting his moustache. "For my sake, dear child, be patient. You know we have often made it our boast that we laugh at fortune and that we always fall on our feet. Above all," and here

his eyes seemed fairly to bore into her, so determined he was to implant this idea in her mind, "remember that neither of us is in any real danger. I should dislike to have a coward for a daughter. Are you afraid?"

"No, not a scrap," she protested, her eyes growing black and bold. "Why should I be afraid?"

"Bravo!" he cried. Then he stooped over and kissed her, but not making any great show of feeling, thinking she might be upset by it. "I shall telegraph at once to your Aunt Belinda to come here to look after you, but before she arrives I shall probably be released."

He got up, with who can say what uneasiness at thus leaving her, as one may say, to her fate. The officers came forward at the instant, and all three moved toward the door. In a moment he was gone.

This was the blackest moment Marjorie had ever known.

Then the man with the sharp eyes and the grizzly beard went to her, no doubt expecting

some outbreak. Marjorie, however, had herself well in hand. Her father had often said that she could be at will either a baby or a brick-bat, and at his entreaty to be brave had instantly conquered her inclination to weep. Besides, this grizzly man, as he tiptoed toward her, with his face screwed up, and snapping his fingers as if she were a dog, or a baby who by this means could be diverted, appealed to her sense of humor, and she had half a mind to jump up and bark or to gurgle, crow and shake her hands, as the part that would best answer his expectation.

The grizzly man was no doubt well pleased that there was not to be such a scene as he had perhaps anticipated on the removal of the father. Her presence here was exceedingly puzzling to him, for as a usual thing, as on his dark errands he flees from one place to another, a conspirator does not encumber himself with a child, and never before on arresting a suspicious character had he been compelled to provide quarters for any such innocent companion.

"I suppose," said Marjorie to him, "that now you are going to take me off to some dungeon."

"Tut, tut!" he cried, or some foreign words to that effect. "What an idea! I'm going to send you to the nicest place you were ever in, where you will find lots of little boys and girls — two or three hundred of them — to play with you."

"Are their fathers travellers whom you have pretended were conspirators?" she asked, suspiciously.

"Ha, ha! you're a funny little girl. You like a joke, don't you?"

He looked so silly and so helpless tiptoeing in front of her that it's no wonder that one of the officers who had been looking on from the other end of the room took pity on him and came to the rescue.

"*I'll* tell her about it, and she will go with *me*," said this individual in an insinuating way, seating himself on the settee with his arm along the back, so that Marjorie immediately moved

to the very end of it. "It's a beautiful place called the Queen's Orphanage."

"Well, I don't want to go there. I'm not an orphan, you know," protested Marjorie, half laughing, half crying, and gripping the arm of the settee as if she would only be taken there by main force.

The grizzly man looked at her more helplessly than ever, but the other, who was a red-cheeked, good-humored creature, had not lost faith in the power of his own eloquence, and set himself to persuade her that the greatest good fortune that could possibly befall a child was to become an inmate of this institution.

So graphically did he describe the scene presented to the passer-by every afternoon by the orphanage playground (which in all probability was all of the institution that he had ever seen), that it arose visibly before the disgusted Marjorie. She could almost see the orphans "frisking there like lambs in springtime," to use the red-cheeked man's own figure, chasing each other around the trees or dancing in cir-

cles around that bush that grows in every playground, or around the shameless maiden who for so many generations has waited, "laughing and crying" for a young man to come. She saw the swings, seesaws and joggling boards with which that playground was provided, with their burden of delighted orphans, for with his great legs thrust out, and holding on to imaginary ropes, he showed how they swung up to the very branches of the lime trees, or he bobbed up and down on the settee, waving his great red, pudgy hands for all the world like some gleeful infant on a seesaw or a joggling board. He was so silly as to be positively fascinating, and she watched him with an interest that quite deceived and elated him.

Poor man! how crestfallen he was when, having come to the end of his description, Marjorie shook her head and cried out, looking imploringly at each of her companions in turn: "Oh, do n't make me go to an *orphan* asylum! It would be dreadful, perfectly dreadful, for I 've plenty of relations to take care of me, and a home of my own, too."

"Where?" asked the grizzly man, rather curiously.

"In Biddeford—"

The grizzly man shook his head, and the red-cheeked man shook his also, and said he never heard of any such place.

"You have n't any home here in Marll, anyhow," he answered her. "Something has got to be done with you *to-night*. It 's getting late, and the Queen's Orphanage is near by. Now, I know you will be a good girl and come along with *me*."

It was the grizzly man, however, who struck the right chord, for now, becoming impatient, he left off tiptoeing about and snapping his fingers, and cried out:—

"Dear me, what a fuss! And your father—if he *is* your father—declared that you would be reasonable."

"Did he know where you meant to take me?" asked Marjorie. "Well, then, I 'll go there."

She got up at once, and the red-cheeked

man, looking very cheerful, led her out of the police station into the street.

And this is how it happened that on her arrival at Marll this child of an adoring father found herself lodged in a home for the fatherless.

CHAPTER IV

IT was a proud day for Avaril, for the little Queen Margaretta was to be crowned. The cities were all in gala attire. The bells pealed from every steeple, and the flag of Avaril fluttered from every building. Marll, where the ceremony was to take place, was especially beautiful in its festal trim, and the people there, from the greatest minister of state to the humblest citizen, were occupied with nothing but the coronation of the little queen.

It was ten o'clock, and as the ceremonies did not begin until twelve, the ladies of the royal household were in the palace garden. No one in the palace at Marll that day was so stolid as not to be thrilled and excited by the solemn spectacle they were to witness, when a little child was to be singled out from mankind for the responsibilities and danger, the loneliness and self-sacrifice that the nations confer with a

crown. Even the Countess of Barnstetter, who had always cultivated the calm of repose as beseeming a true aristocrat, wriggled her foot incessantly under her satin petticoat, and was obliged to hold on to her chair to keep herself from jumping out of it. Lady Wilhelmina Starr and Lady Ursula Stolberg, who had been ladies-of-honor to the late queen, and now served Margaretta with like devotion, were restlessly pacing the upper terrace, longing for the moment when the ceremonies should begin.

Below the terraces lay the beautiful and famous court garden, a picturesque spot where nature was untampered with, save where the luxuriance of vegetation encroached upon paths, or where a rustic bridge might span the little stream that wound about the garden like a blue ribbon.

The young queen's favorite walk was the path lined with fir trees, called the Avenue of Whispers, or Whispering Avenue, which led to a waterfall; and here on a stone bench she

sat with old Hedwig, her nurse, on the morning of her coronation.

At a first glance, the likeness that has been spoken of as existing between this little queen and Marjorie Westbrook was evident enough, but the unlikeness in expression was greater than the likeness in form and color. Marjorie's face sparkled with life and happiness. It was naïve, petulant, merry or sad in the same moment, but the face of Queen Margaretta ever wore a sweet seriousness. Patience sat on her white brow, and her child-eyes had a wistfulness in them. Moreover, this unlikeness in appearance was emphasized by a still greater difference in manner, for that of the child-queen was a combination of dignity and simplicity such as the little American could never attain unto.

The princess wore a white dress of sheerest lawn, which was made simply with full baby-waist and short, puffed sleeves. She had beautifully formed arms and slender hands, which lay folded with unchildlike restfulness

"'LONG LIVE THE QUEEN.'"

in her lap. At her feet lay a beautiful greyhound, who, whenever the old nurse touched his royal mistress, growled savagely.

"Good Hedwig," said Margaretta, raising her flower-face to the yellow, wrinkled one of the old nurse, "there will be just time now for the tale I like best."

Old Hedwig nodded her kerchiefed head.

"Ay, Your Majesty," she answered, "I was about to tell it, being bound to do so by my promise to the Romany," and, having glanced in all directions about her as if to gain assurance that no other than the queen would listen to the tale, she lowered her voice and began :

"It was a morning in the pleasant season, and the cries of 'Long live the queen, long live the queen,' rang through the streets of Marll. Your August Majesty was just born, and over the apartments of Queen Beatrice waved the white flag which announced to the populace the birth of an heir to the throne of Avaril."

"And though the flag was white instead of red, because I was a girl, the people were glad, were they not, Hedwig?"

"Glad! They were wild with joy, Your Majesty. They could not contain themselves, but ran through the streets madly shouting, 'Long live the queen, long live the queen.' Bonfires were built all over the kingdom as soon as the news spread of Your Majesty's birth. For everybody rejoiced that a successor of the good King Humboldt would sit upon the throne, which otherwise would pass to that blackheart, Duke Otto of Cohentz."

"And — and — good Hedwig, do not forget about the old lame man," entreated the queen.

"Surely not, Excellentissimo, for he stood by the bronze statue of King Humboldt, for which, in their love for him, every one, even to the humblest man, wished to contribute, so that now one sometimes hears some rough fellow say: —

"'Behold the statue of our good king. 'T is a fine work of art and I myself went without a coat all that year, or our family ate nothing but porridge for months, that—'"

"Not that story now, good Hedwig," said the queen. "You are to tell me of the old lame man, you know."

"Well, the old cripple stood in the grand square by King Humboldt's statue, blocking the way," Hedwig went on. "He blocked the way, for he had a great following, and when the police went to clear the grand square of this obstruction, the people would not let the old tinker (for an old tinker he was) be hindered.

"'See,' they said, 'he is so feeble and lame that he has not stirred from his house these five years, and on this day he hath walked a good half-mile, in his joy that a child of the good king has been born to rule over us; and he is going to see with his own eyes the white flag that waves over the palace.' Then they fetched a litter and car-

ried him to the palace, and he was hoisted up above the heads of the people. So quiet they were for an instant that his old quavering voice was heard plainly for a good distance as he cried, 'Long live our queen!'

"Then did the people shout the words after him till they rang to the very heavens."

"Ah," said the little queen, smiling, "the people were glad I had come to reign over them. I hope they will never be sorry."

"Well, then," resumed the old nurse, "the sound of their voices reached the queen's ears, and sending for me, she whispered low, 'My faithful Hedwig, do the people rejoice, or are they angry that I have not given them a king, instead of a queen?'

"They do but rejoice, Your Majesty," I answered.

"By and by she sent for me a second time.

"'Hedwig,' she said, 'my heart misgives me. Go thou out into the streets privately and listen to the people to find out if now and then amid the voices there is not one

that prophesies evil — one that laments that a woman is to wear the crown of Avaril.'

"I feared me that her majesty's mind wandered, for 't was not her wont to own to any fears, being as proud and brave as beseems a queen. But though I misliked to leave the royal babe a moment in other hands, I was constrained to obey.

"Muffling myself with cloak and veil, that none knowing that I came from the palace should seek to hide his feeling from me, I went into the streets."

"And were the people glad — were they really glad?" asked the little queen, as eagerly as if she knew not what the answer would be.

The good Hedwig bowed and smiled, saying: —

"Such letting out of the heart, Your Majesty, such protestations of thankfulness and rejoicing were never heard before in Avaril. Listen as I might, I could hear naught else, and I turned back with only good tidings for

the queen-regent. To shorten the way, I came through the court garden, and as Your Majesty knows, if one enters it at the western gate, the shortest way to the palace is through the Whispering Avenue. So, as I was hastening on, I suddenly beheld just beyond the waterfall, in the middle of this path, the figure of a Romany. As one might guess, she was the mother, the queen of a gypsy tribe. Her brows were bound with a crimson kerchief and gold coins were plentifully strung amongst her jet-black locks. Tall and majestic, rich-colored, dark-browed and with eyes of fire, she could make one forget even such an errand as mine.

"When I had come within two yards of the spot where she stood, she made a gesture for me to stop.

"'You are the nurse of the new-born queen.' Heaven alone knows how she of all those who had seen me could have discovered this fact, but I did not deny it, and immediately she went on:—

"'Listen, woman! I have read her horoscope and for the sake of her father, King Humboldt, who did ever deal honorably with the gypsies, I would ward off the evils that I read too surely in the stars will be her lot. She is born under clear skies, but the clouds will soon gather over her. The queen-regent, her mother, will die ere the year is out. Blind, blind will her counsellors be. But let her beware St. Margaret's Day, St. Margaret's Day, the day of birth. Woman, promise me to repeat this warning to her.'

"I promised," said the old nurse. "Ah, me, she would have banned me had I not, and a gypsy's curse works mischief. So I promised to repeat her warning to Your Majesty, word for word, every year of your life on the day before St. Margaret's Day, and once beside, on the day you should be crowned."

"And you have kept your promise faithfully, good Hedwig," said the queen. "And 't is well you have finished, for, listen! there are the bells again, and 't is time for me to be dressed in my coronation robes."

CHAPTER V

"THE people love me. I am not afraid." So said the little queen as she went forth to be crowned.

The coronation of Margaretta was to be celebrated with great solemnity and magnificence. That she was to be crowned now, instead of upon her eighteenth birthday, as is the usual custom, was a political measure. The idea originated in the brain of the old Duke Von Boum, who, since the death of the queen-regent, Margaretta's mother, had been at the head of the government. He had been the chief counsellor of good King Humboldt, and of the old king, too, King Humboldt's father. Old as he was, it was his pride and joy to serve and honor this little child of eleven years, though, to be sure, he wished to do it in his own way. There is no doubt at all that he would have laid down his life if thereby he

could establish Margaretta more securely upon the throne of Avaril, and that it was due to his skill and loyalty that all the schemes of the Ottoists (as the followers of Duke Otto were called) to seize the throne had been defeated.

The ceremonies of the day to the smallest detail, it was said, were arranged by the old minister, all with a view to its effect upon the people. Everywhere were to be signs of the nation's prosperity. A great fleet of war-vessels was drawn up along the coast. Representatives of her armies, of her subject peoples, and great civic parades would bespeak her wealth and power. All this display, this pomp and glitter and gorgeous pageantry must stir the national pride and the loyalty of the people to Margaretta's line, under which Avaril had so prospered. Then, when this feeling was at its height, the child of good King Humboldt was to be carried through the streets to receive her rightful crown. Impossible that the public heart should not be moved by the spectacle. Impossible but that

every man would silently in his heart take the oath of fealty to Margaretta.

Had she been made to Von Boum's order, the little queen could not be better fitted for her part.

She wore that day a dress of soft white silk, with marguerites (the national flower of Avaril), thickly set in gold and pearls, upon it. The waist was cut in a high square, both back and front, and the sleeves were looped up with strings of pearls. But no sooner had one taken in this magnificence than it was forgotten again in the far greater beauty of the young queen's face. A little face so adorned by the loveliest graces of our common nature —love, patience, courage, and purity— as only one face in hundreds, however these virtues may reside in the heart, ever gives expression to, and then, while her lightest glance seemed to carry such meanings of tenderness, her whole bearing announced, " I am the queen."

As she rode through the streets to the cathedral, where the coronation was to take

place, Margaretta was not hidden from view; trust the old minister for that. The queen's carriage was of glass, the body of it solid silver set with precious stones. Over it was a canopy of rich ruby velvet, embroidered in gold and decorated with ostrich plumes, both red and white. The carriage was drawn by milk-white horses with silver harnesses adorned by more ostrich feathers, and beside each horse walked an officer, very splendid to behold, in red and gold. The queen's body-guard rode in advance of Margaretta's carriage. It was made up of the largest and handsomest young men in the kingdom, and as they wore gold breastplates, and the flying dragon, which was the national device of Avaril, in burnished gold adorned their helmets, they made an imposing part of the procession.

Just behind Margaretta's coach came her favorite greyhound, held in a flower-wound leash by an attendant dressed in ivory white, with crimson scarf and collar, and shoulder-pieces of gold.

This breed of greyhound is the pride of Avaril, and the prime minister knew that the choice of one of these native dogs from her kennels, filled with rare dogs from all quarters of the world, would make for Margaretta's popularity with her subjects, for which reason did Blanco take this conspicuous position in the procession.

Poor Blanco was utterly bewildered by these strange proceedings. No doubt in his stupid dog-brain there was a confused idea that it was for no good that they were taking his queen-mistress away from the palace, or the palace gardens, where he liked best to keep her. Perhaps she was held against her will in that moving cage, as, despite his struggles, he was held by the flower-wound leash. And in particular it infuriated him to see the Duke Von Boum, whom he hated, seated so near her. It was this that occasioned Blanco's low growls, which Margaretta would silence with a look from her soft eyes, seeing which the people would go crazy with approval and delight.

Next in the procession came many splendid equipages with the members of the States-General, with the ladies of the royal household, with foreign princes and nobles, with representatives of foreign governments, and of her colonies; and behind these were regiments of armed and mounted men, in uniforms of dark green and steel, carrying glittering spears; others in tawny orange and black and gold, marching with waving pennants, and the air was filled with the clank, clank of steel and tramp of horses' hoofs.

While cannons boomed, bells pealed, and people cheered, the stately procession moved on, as dazzling and lovely as a scene from fairyland, a never-to-be-forgotten spectacle. It was imposing, but it had a pathetic side also. The very magnificence of her coronation was a sign of the little queen's weakness. Its true significance was *danger*.

Happily, Margaretta herself was unconscious of this meaning. She looked happily out upon her people (whose demonstrations

of delight warmed her heart), casting no mechanical smiles upon them, but greeting them with winning heartiness.

As she looked upon that sea of faces, all turned toward her, she murmured: —

"The people love me, I am sure they do. Madame," turning to the old Countess of Barnstetter, who sat beside her, "do you not see with what a will they swing their hats and cry, 'God save the queen,' or, 'Long live the queen.' Look at that old man with a white beard yonder; and see, there is a woman holding a little girl by the hand, who, though she has tears in her eyes, is smiling at me. Why has she tears in her eyes, madame?"

"No doubt the sun blinds her, Your Majesty," replied the countess. And for a moment her eyes and also those of the prime minister rested compassionately upon the little queen.

Margaretta, however, continued to look at her subjects with glad confidence.

"I shall make them very happy, for," with

a smile at Von Boum, "you will teach me to rule wisely."

"Your Majesty will remember the oath you will take to-day," answered the duke, who never lost an opportunity to impress upon Margaretta's mind the sacrifices that are demanded of a sovereign, "and that a queen's happiness resides above all in the welfare of the nation."

Alas, poor little rosebud queen, she was destined early to learn the truth of these words!

The countess bit her lip. She had one tender spot in her proud heart, and that was for Margaretta.

After all, the little queen was too young, perhaps, to realize the significance of what had been said, for she continued to regard her people with a happy, maternal sort of smile which was amusing, repeating undismayed the formula she had been taught: —

"I will always place the nation's welfare before my own happiness, as a good queen should."

Just as she said this, they reached the grand square, opposite which rose the beautiful cathedral where the coronation was to take place; and here stood the statue of King Humboldt.

He was represented in a most paternal attitude, although he was only twenty-five when he died; with his arms outstretched, as if he were blessing his people.

The pose was considered very conventional and stupid by persons instructed in things artistic, but it much pleased the masses, who loved to commemorate in this way the benignity of the dead king. Whether artistic or not, one was forced to admit that there was a lofty expression on the bronze face that was impressive, and that a vague, tender smile played over the stiff metal lips. No doubt the sculptor had caught the true expression of the good king's face, for so like it was that of the pink-and-white one of flesh and blood that was upturned to it for a moment as the queen's carriage passed by, that the old minister's

eyes grew dim as he looked at the two faces, for he had loved the king with all his loyal heart; and he took the hand of Margaretta in his, pressing upon it a reverential kiss.

They had now arrived at the cathedral, where a charming and unexpected sight met the queen's eye. For here, on either side of the great door, were ranged in rows the little orphans of St. Mary's, or the "queen's orphans," as they were more commonly called, having been previously under the patronage of Queen Beatrice, as they were now under the patronage of Margaretta.

The girls wore white muslin frocks, each with a bunch of marguerites pinned in her kerchief, a dainty close white cap on each little curly head. The boys wore quaint suits decorated with gilt buttons.

As Margaretta alighted from the coach the girls made profound courtesies, and the boys raised their hats, bowing low. The little maids were as pretty as dolls, one with glistening red-gold curls and dark eyes particularly pleas-

ing the little queen, who in her delight forgot for a moment that she herself was not a little girl, but a queen.

As these little maids slowly rose from this obeisance, one of them, the little one whose beauty had pleased Margaretta, looking straight into the royal eyes, made an ugly, mocking grimace.

No one but Margaretta saw it, for Von Boum was walking with his chin in the air, his eyes straight before him, and every one else was looking at the queen.

"My people love me. I am not afraid," Margaretta had said, cheered by the demonstrations of joy which greeted her on every side; but now the cheering and shouts and waving of caps were forgotten. In vain the cannon boomed, trumpets blared, and flags waved. She saw neither the great mass of rejoicing people in the square nor the august assembly in the cathedral. She saw nothing but the ugly grimace of the little pauper.

Perhaps the most touching and memorable

moment of that great day was when at last the little queen stood before her throne.

It was on a great platform hung with royal purple, in the centre of the chapel, and under a canopy on which was the great flying dragon of Avaril. The throne itself was of silver, richly studded with rubies. Behind it stood the royal standard bearer, and an officer or court dignitary, covered with decorations, holding the crown on a red cushion.

Imagine, then, this lovely child on the dawn-lit side of twelve years, with little, helpless hands folded before her, and innocent, great baby-eyes raised to the face of the archbishop, before whom and the assembled multitude she swore to maintain the constitution, to defend and guard the territory of the kingdom, and to protect the rights of her subjects.

Could anything be more absurd and pathetic?

Then the archbishop lowered the crown on the child's head, at the same time proclaiming her title as: —

"Margaretta, very sacred Majesty, always august Queen of Avaril."

They placed her on the throne, — the great massive throne that only a large man could fill, and upon which she looked smaller and more helpless than ever. The glittering jewelled crown was held over her head (otherwise it would have slipped down to her shoulders), and she looked upon the closely packed mass of people, half frightened, half proudly, and still with that sting in the heart that the charity orphan had implanted there. Every member of the States-General then took the oath of fealty to the queen's person and throne. It was during this ceremony that a little incident occurred which was looked upon by many as an ill omen to Margaretta's reign.

All through the ceremonies the behavior of Blanco, the greyhound, had been most reprehensible. So fiercely he tugged at the leash that held him that although every inch of standing-room in the cathedral was precious, there was a wide vacant circle around him. Again and again his angry growl was heard

"BLANCO COULD STAND NO MORE."

through the church. Then, as if this were not bad enough, he began to whine in a distressful way that struck altogether a wrong note in the general rejoicing. Meantime, his great, faithful eyes never wavered from the little white-robed figure that would always be queen of his heart, whether it was ever seated on the great silver throne or not.

When the crown was placed upon Margaretta's head his eyes fairly blazed. He stood perfectly quiet, with only those blazing eyes and a certain shivering of the skin to bespeak his agony. Then came the moment when the oath of fealty was to be taken, and Von Boum, bending low, kissed the queen's hand, — Von Boum whom he hated from the depths of his fierce, faithful dog-heart. Blanco could stand no more. With one frantic effort he snapped the leash, and with a bound was upon that purple-draped platform, his sharp teeth in the minister's leg.

A tremor ran over the great assembly, and for a moment there was danger of a panic.

But the dog was instantly caught, and growling and blazing, dragged from the cathedral.

And so at last, with only this protest from a brute, Margaretta was crowned Queen of Avaril and carried in triumph back to the palace.

CHAPTER VI

THE astute young reader has doubtless surmised that the girl who had mocked at the queen was no other than our poor Marjorie.

As she stood with the children from the orphanage by the door of the great cathedral, she was keenly conscious of the irony of fate by which she was at last witnessing this gorgeous scene in the guise of a pauper.

The grimace which Margaretta felt as a mark of aversion to herself was but an involuntary expression of her resentment against the course of things, and in particular the course of the government of Avaril.

It was impossible that she should understand her father's position as that of a man suspected of being an Ottoist, and of having been concerned in a conspiracy against the queen. She believed merely that he had been mistaken for

some one against whom the government "had a grudge," and it would have been a very wise and philosophical child who, under such exasperating circumstances, would not have felt rather bitter.

Marjorie had been received with much kindness at the Queen's Orphanage.

The institution was full at this time, but the matron saw that she was comfortably lodged that first night. Afterwards she shared a bed with one of the older girls, a wise person who had been in the institution longer than any of the other children, and it seemed almost as if she belonged to the corps of instructors. Adelaide had a rather depressing effect sometimes on Marjorie, imparting to her so much more information than that gay young person could digest.

Like the rest of the world at Marll, the queen's orphans were wild over the coming coronation. Simple as it was, they had been well drilled in their part in the programme, and up to the very morning of the coronation

practised it before a little French dancing master.

The Frenchman was charmed by Marjorie, who, it was decided, should go with the other children to the cathedral, if she could be taught to make the obeisance in time. This was mere play for Marjorie. With her instinct for the dramatic, she made her courtesy so deep, so reverential, so modest, that the orphans gazed upon her with wide-eyed wonder. When the dancing master praised her, and bade the others take her for their model, she immediately assumed an utterly stolid expression, stiffened herself from head to foot, and bobbed before him in such perfect imitation of them as made him rage to behold. But he did not complain of her to the matron, as he would have been perfectly justified in doing. He only shook his head, saying, as if that explained everything: —

"*Parbleu! elle est Americaine.*"

In her heart, despite such playfulness, Peg was terribly uneasy about her father, and

wished a hundred times that she had never aspired to witness the coronation of the Queen of Avaril. Doubtless, as he said, the mistake would be rectified and he would be released; but in the meantime he was perhaps very uncomfortable. If he were not uncomfortable in any other way he would no doubt make himself so about her.

The orphans walked to the cathedral two by two, Marjorie and Adelaide together. Marjorie was pleased that Adelaide fell to her share, because she was so meek that she would listen without protest to the disparagement of Avaril, by which means Marjorie sometimes relieved her resentment.

The long waiting-time at the church door would have passed very wearily for the orphans had it not been for Marjorie's fun; she enlivened them by little jokes, earning a severe rebuke by far too good mimicry of some grand personages who by mischance could not get places in the cathedral.

"Ah me! how angry they were, these poor

mesdames and messieurs!" she whispered to Adelaide. "I suppose of course this is a wonderful event for your people, because Avaril is an absolute monarchy."

Marjorie paused. She was not sure that Avaril *was* an absolute monarchy, or even exactly what an absolute monarchy might be. She had heard her Aunt Belinda use the term in a derogatory sort of way, and thought it sounded very well. As Adelaide — who would certainly have corrected her if she were wrong — had nothing to say, she went on airily: —

"In America we have these shows every four years, when we set up a new president, so it 's no great affair to me. I 'm willing that any one who wants it should have *my* place."

"Four years is a long time," said Adelaide, "and you have n't lived long enough to be tired out, I should think, with the number of presidents that you have set up."

"Oh, but there are other times when we have splendid parades," Marjorie began, but was interrupted by an excited exclamation that the procession was coming.

Sure enough, the Queen's Guards had just turned into the great square, catching the full sunshine on their gold breastplates and helmets, and filling the space with the color of their gorgeous scarlet uniforms.

"Are n't they a gaudy lot, though!" exclaimed Marjorie, whose color rose and heart beat fast at the gay spectacle. "But, dear me! they march so slowly it makes me ache. It is n't the way we do things in *Biddeford*. Oh, Adelaide, I wish you could see *our* processions on the Fourth of July!"

Inferior though it might be, Adelaide was too interested in the scene before her eyes to listen to any description of Biddeford magnificence. Her attention was riveted to the queen's coach, as was Marjorie's also.

"Red and white," she commented; "real countrified, peppermint-candy sort of color."

Here, the carriage having stopped, the queen alighted, and Peg was struck dumb, as was every one else who beheld the sweetness and youth, and magnificence and simplicity that

were united in the person of this little queen. And something not to be swallowed or otherwise got rid of came into her throat, and tears came into her eyes.

So now, as Margaretta, with the prime minister, advanced, was the time when the orphans were to salute her, and as one child they ducked their little heads, bending low. Just as they did so, as a black cloud over all the pomp and glitter of the scene, over all the poetry and prettiness of it, came the thought into Marjorie's mind of her dear father a prisoner. Such a revulsion of feeling it brought, such anger and bitterness, that as she drew herself up again she impulsively expressed her feelings in the way that has been mentioned.

Margaretta passed on into the cathedral and Marjorie looked about her. Evidently no one except the little queen had noticed the awful act she had been guilty of.

"Ah me!" cried Adelaide, "is she not beautiful — our queen? And as good, it is said, as

she is beautiful. And now they will put the crown upon her head and proclaim her: —

"Margaretta, very sacred Majesty, always august Queen of Avaril."

"Gracious! that little snipe — how very ridiculous!" cried Marjorie, but by good luck, not knowing the word for "snipe" in Adelaide's tongue, she was obliged to substitute *bird*, which of course was not so offensive. Then to every one's surprise, this madcap took out her pocket-handkerchief and began to weep — a performance that was not at all on the programme.

CHAPTER VII

NEXT day, whatever went on at the court, the orphanage resumed the even tenor of its way. The French dancing-master was seen there no more. Seven times nine and six times eight were much talked about, and little samplers appeared on which hemstitching, backstitching and darning were practised; in none of which things did Marjorie excel.

Then followed three miserable days when she must have forgotten her father's injunction to be brave and patient; particularly did she ignore the last-named virtue, which was not hers by nature.

A black sheep she was among the docile orphans, trying to the utmost the forbearance of teacher and supervisors.

They could not understand why she should be so unusually clever in some ways and so unusually stupid in others.

"Fancy, a child of eleven years," they said, "who could not make a bed or a button-hole, and was unable to answer such a question as: 'Two-thirds of four-fifths are three-tenths of how many?'"

Between the wrong answers that she gave out of ill-timed attempts at pleasantry and those she gave out of her ignorance, she nearly drove them wild.

When asked to state the comparative size and importance of the nations, she declared her own country to stand first and Avaril last. She insisted that she had never seen Avaril upon the maps at all. It must have been pure mischief that prompted this answer.

But when, during the catechism which was in order in that institution every morning, she was once asked, "What is the chief end of man?" she replied in all sincerity:—

"Why, his head, I suppose."

And afterwards she carried it off as a joke rather than own to her stupidity.

Yet she knew how to be so charming and

she was so affectionate and dear that the mischief was quickly forgiven.

"The poor child is in a strange country and away from all her friends," the good matron would say when any complaint was made against Marjorie. "She has been petted and spoiled a little, perhaps, but, after all, it's not every child in her place that would be so reasonable."

Every afternoon a circle would be made about her as she sat under the lime trees in the school garden, and all her offences would be forgotten while she sang song after song, gay or grave, in her sweet, free, dashing voice, that every now and then had that surprising note of pathos in it.

As for the orphans, they unreservedly admired and adored her. They tried to sing and to play and to carry themselves just like Marjorie, wherein, perhaps, lay the chief trouble.

Well, a week passed, and as far as Marjorie could see, her father was no nearer his liberty than ever. The occasion for all the trouble he

had, this harmless American gentleman, guiltless of any conspiracy against the Queen of Avaril or any one else, it is not the purpose of the present writer to explain. It has nothing to do with Marjorie's story, except as the cause of her numerous adventures, and an explanation would call for many a page, filled with dry politics. Besides, as a secondary reason, the whys and wherefores are altogether beyond the present writer's knowledge or ability to discover.

At all events, at the end of that week Marjorie was very naturally discouraged and alarmed. She actually grew thin, and could neither eat nor sleep o' nights. There were often tears in her pretty eyes.

It was not for herself that she was miserable but for her father, who, as she often reminded herself, was suffering from his unselfish desire to give her pleasure. Oh, how often she wished that there never was any such country as Avaril.

As soon as he had discovered that his pre-

dicament was serious, Mr. Westbrook had telegraphed to his sister, Miss Belinda Westbrook, to come at once to Avaril for the protection and care of Marjorie, who therefore looked eagerly for her each day. She hoped that when her Aunt Belinda came she would know how to help her father. As Marjorie has previously explained, her Aunt Belinda was a most resolute person, and whatever she set her mind on, in one way or another, was usually brought to pass. To be sure, Marjorie did not see exactly how she was to cope with that mysterious but powerful thing called "the government." Still, such was her faith in her aunt, born of long and convincing experience, that she counted eagerly upon her arrival.

Sometimes in her impatience, Marjorie stole out of the orphanage grounds and walked toward the railway station, peering into each cab for the familiar face of her aunt, and one fine morning she was so unfortunate as to lose herself in this big, strange city. Wandering about, at last she came out upon the square

where the palace is. As she walked along the southern boulevard whereon the palace garden borders, she wished she might get a glimpse of Margaretta; for the clocks were just striking eleven, and she remembered to have heard that the queen always walked in the palace garden at that hour.

Despite her troubles, Marjorie was still intensely interested in the young queen. She thought her quite the loveliest little being that she had ever seen.

As for that horrible grimace she had made, Marjorie believed that Margaretta had been too much occupied by her own very interesting affairs to notice it. It was always so easy for Marjorie to believe what was pleasantest, and the more she thought of it the more ashamed she was of her own uncouth behavior; that it had been both vulgar and unkind, and far away from that dignity that her father had urged upon her, as the proper way to bear the indignities which they suffered, she was now very sure.

When at last Marjorie came to an open gateway in the palace garden, she could not forego the chance to slip in to view the place. This gate, as it happened, was not far from the Avenue of Whispers, and it was into this very path that chance turned her steps. Having walked a short distance, the little girl suddenly stopped, uttering a low exclamation of surprised delight.

On a stone bench near a water-fall was the little figure of the queen, and in the distance beyond, the vanishing skirts of some governess or attendant. The queen was entirely alone.

It seemed to Marjorie that fate must have brought Margaretta to this solitary place, banished the governess, and then fetched her to plead her father's cause.

And what a lovely spot it was! Cool and shady, with the musical trickle of the water-fall to make it seem more cool and shady, and the misty blue shadow-spaces, broken here and there by dazzling spots of gold sunshine.

The only sound that broke the silence was the fall of the water, the occasional chirp of some bird, and now and then, softened by distance, the screech of the peacocks on the terrace by the palace.

Marjorie wondered what was the proper way to address a queen. Should she drop upon her knees and hide her face, which was the posture of Effie Deans in a picture she had seen, where the Scotch damsel was begging her sister's life of the king?

It looked very well in the picture, but did seem in this case, as one little girl addressing another, very absurd.

Should she begin her speech with "Most Royal Sovereign," or use any of those high-sounding titles that had been given to Avaril's queen? And if so, which one?

But having come within a few yards of Margaretta, who looked hastily up at the sound of footsteps, she simply stood stock-still, all thought of court etiquette put to rout by that deep sense of human brother-

hood that was one of her strongest feelings.

"You poor, sweet little thing! You are crying. Oh, what's the matter?" she said, just as she would have said to any other child.

CHAPTER VIII

SINCE her coronation Margaretta had been very unhappy. This was chiefly because of the loss of Blanco, who had been the only intimate friend she had ever had.

Although with great self-control the prime minister had gone through the ceremonies at the cathedral, he had been seriously bitten by the greyhound. He had been laid up ever since that time in consequence, unable to attend to the affairs of state, which, like some naughty child, took advantage of it to go wrong. That he should give orders that Blanco should be killed or "put out of the way" was perfectly justifiable, but it bore hard on Margaretta. It was good practice, however, in the business of giving up her own happiness for the good of others, and she had acquiesced, though with a good many tears.

"Queens do not cry," said the countess, find-

ing her royal ward grieving bitterly. But then the countess disliked dogs, poor Blanco in particular, and considered his demise as a happy dispensation of Providence.

Margaretta conscientiously struggled for that serenity of demeanor that is expected of sovereigns, but her heart was very sore, and again and again human nature was too strong for her, so that one day when they were in the garden the countess declared herself greatly displeased, and ordered her to sit quietly for an hour upon the stone bench as a punishment.

It seemed to poor little Margaretta that the disadvantages of being a queen far outweighed the advantages. High-sounding but unmeaning titles took the place of petting; pompous and tiresome ceremonials of the healthful and natural sports of childhood; ladies-of-honor instead of playmates; and to crown all, she could not even cry in peace. Beside, it did not seem as if, notwithstanding the sacrifices she must make for them, her people loved her very

much, for the recollection of the charity orphan's behavior troubled her still. In fact, she was thinking of it now, as she sat miserably on the stone bench, making the most of her unusual privacy to weep.

At the sound of Marjorie's step she looked up in consternation and the expectation of reproof, for she thought that the countess must have come back.

"You are the little girl who mocked at me when I was going into the cathedral," she said. "Oh, why do you hate me so?"

"Hate you? I perfectly adore you, for you are the loveliest thing I ever saw in all my life," cried Marjorie, blushing, partly with shame and partly with fervor. "I did n't mean that day anything unpleasant, and I 'm perfectly willing to kneel down and kiss the hem of your garments, or bump my forehead on the ground, or whatever is the proper thing to do. Only you will have to tell me, because I do n't know."

"Oh, no. I do n't wish you to do anything

of that kind," said the queen, with a sigh that went to Marjorie's heart. She looked about the garden and then gave another sigh, this time one of relief. "I am glad that you do not hate me," she said, with her little air of dignity. "The thought that you did made me unhappy."

"How sorry I am I was ever so rude and so horrid as to do what I did! I quite hate myself for it. Were you — Your Majesty, I mean," said Marjorie, bringing herself up with a jerk, "was Your August Majesty crying for that?"

"Well, partly for that, and partly because Blanco has been killed. He was my favorite dog, and he loved me."

"How dared they kill him, if you did not wish it — I mean, of course, if Your Majesty did not wish it?" said Marjorie, with a puzzled frown. "*You are the queen!*"

"Yes, I am the queen," Margaretta assented. "But Blanco was dangerous. He bit the Duke Von Boum, who therefore ordered that he

should be put out of the way. I know it was quite right, but I am terribly lonely."

Marjorie sat down, uninvited, on the stone seat beside the queen, and took her hand. There were tears in her eyes also.

Margaretta stopped crying at once. The warm clasp of this child's hand comforted her with its friendliness. She did not draw her own away.

"That Boom Boom, with his chin in the air, seems to be a very officious person," Marjorie presently observed. "I wonder what he would have done if he had seen me draw that face. I think I really *meant* it for him, though you were so beautiful I could not help *looking* at you.

"If he had seen you! Oh, dear," Margaretta shuddered. "How fortunate it is that he did *not*."

"What would have happened?" asked Marjorie, with much curiosity, but the queen shook her head doubtfully, and she went on with an easy air: "Perhaps he would have had me be-

headed. *Put out of the way* like poor Blanco. But, after all, it 's not so easy to put *me* out of the way. I suppose they thought that was done when I was sent to the orphanage. Yet, here I am. Suppose old Boom Boom were to come along *now*, with his chin down a bit lower for once, so he should see me? "

Margaretta laid her hand on Marjorie's arm, looking anxiously at her.

"I think you had better go. *Some one* might come. In fact, the countess may come back at any moment. I would not wish you to be treated ill."

"They would n't be likely to do anything worse than to turn me out of the garden, and I 'm enjoying myself so," Marjorie objected. "I never expected to have a tête-à-tête with a queen. It 's the only pleasant thing that 's happened since we reached Avaril."

"Oh, then, you are really not one of my subjects," said the queen.

"I 'm not a subject at all, I 'm a queen myself," answered Peg, laughing. "A queen in

disguise, though," she added, looking down at her blue gingham frock, white apron and cape, which was the garb of the queen's orphans.

"You are Queen of —"

"Biddeford," Peg answered, gravely. Then seeing that Margaretta took her at her word, she explained the situation here set forth in nearly eight chapters, embellishing it with anecdote, song, joke and pantomime, all in her own irresistible way, until the queen was in ecstasies. Such a companionable little person as Marjorie had probably never come before in the Queen of Avaril's way, and the eyes that now watched every motion of the story-teller glistened with just as much admiration and delight as had the eyes of the children at the orphanage.

"And so," she said at last, when the tale was all told, "you have only to wish for a thing and it is yours."

"Well, that is not exactly the way of it, either. I have wished for many a thing and not got it," Marjorie replied. "But papa gives

me everything he *can*, so that my aunt says that I am spoiled."

"Oh, no, I 'm sure you are not spoiled," said the little queen, with a look of admiration. "You are good and kind beyond any one I ever saw. I do n't wonder that your father loves you so much. And you say that he calls you Peg? Oh, the funny little name!"

"Well, that 's one of his names for me. But he calls me by lots of others, too. Sometimes," she went on, with a roguish look at Margaretta, "he calls me Queenie. I like that name the best of all."

"I should like it the least," said poor Margaretta.

"I suppose no one ever called you that."

The little queen shook her head, with a sigh.

"Or Puss, or Mousey, or Dame Trot, or Tot, or Dot, or Tiny?"

"Oh, no, no," replied Her Majesty.

Each little girl looked at the other rather pensively for a moment, as if trying to realize

the life it was hers to lead. It was far easier, no doubt, for Marjorie to imagine the life of the queen than for the queen to imagine hers. Yet somewhat of the sweet familiarity between this American girl and her father she gathered from Marjorie's story, and she thought of her own father (made, according to Hedwig, out of poor men's coats and dinners), who stood so silently on the grand square, with never a word, either kind or helpful, for her. She wondered if she had a real father instead of a statue of one, if he would ever have loved her as this little girl was loved.

Presently she said: "I suppose you love him in return very much."

Marjorie looked up, with her eyes full of tears.

"I should think so. That is why I stole into the garden. I hoped that I might see you here (though not alone in this lonely way) and have a chance to beg you to have him set free. And now I know that you will, for you are as good as the people say you

are, and he has never done anything at all to deserve to be made a prisoner."

"I would gladly have him set free if I could," Margaretta answered, but in so doubtful a tone that Marjorie rather indignantly demanded:—

"Do you not believe that he is good?"

"Indeed I do," answered the little queen; "but the duke will not listen to me for a moment. He will talk about 'reasons of state,' and will tell me that for the present, matters of this kind are beyond my understanding. I know very well how it will be."

"If I were in your place," cried Marjorie, with spirit, "I would have him beheaded. At the very least, I'd send him to the Tower."

"I don't think I could. He wouldn't go. I shouldn't wish to be ungrateful to him either. The countess says that I owe him a great deal, and that before she died, my mother chose him as my counsellor."

"Well, it seems very queer that a *queen* can't do whatever she wishes to do. But I

suppose when you are grown up it will be different. If I were you, I would have the good old *Nero* days back again."

"Oh, no," cried the queen, who seemed inclined to take things literally. "I have read about Nero in Roman history, and I do n't think he was nice. Why, he was the one who fiddled while Rome was burning! Oh, I hope I sha' n't be like him."

Marjorie looked at the earnest face of the baby-queen, and laughed.

"Well, I guess you won't be *exactly* like him."

"Hush!" whispered Margaretta. "Is not some one coming?"

Both children leaned forward and listened. The scrunch of gravel under the foot-fall was distinctly audible in a little path leading through thick shrubbery into the Whispering Avenue.

"You must go," said the queen, "or they will send you out of the garden, perhaps very roughly. I could n't bear that. Oh, please go."

"'HUSH!' WHISPERED MARGARETTA."

"Not till you've promised to help my father," Marjorie answered, firmly. "I'm thinking of papa and I don't care what happens to *me*. I'll go if you promise to try to get him set free."

"I promise. Yes, I promise," whispered Margaretta. "Quick, or you'll be seen."

In a twinkling, Marjorie was out of sight behind the trees, and none too soon, for already the countess came out of the little path into the avenue.

She sat down on the bench and looked sharply at Margaretta.

"Your Royal Highness has, no doubt, reflected that it is a sovereign's duty to conquer her emotions, and you will be more cheerful in future. He who is called upon to rule others must first learn to rule himself."

The little queen blushed, for she had been far enough from reflecting upon the duties of sovereigns, and the hour which she had been supposed to sit upon the stone bench as upon a stool of repentance was one of the most

enjoyable that she could remember. However, she was extremely reserved by nature, and her experience of life had not fostered impulsive confidences, so she simply said: —

"I will try to be cheerful, madame."

The countess, perceiving no trace of tears on the queen's face, was satisfied.

"That is well," she said, "for the duke desires an interview with you this afternoon."

CHAPTER IX

THE prime minister's interview with the queen took place in the audience chamber in the palace, a lofty and spacious room, having a formal air such as bespoke the grave business that was conducted there. The floor was beautifully inlaid, the wood dark with age and so highly polished as to sharply reflect any bright object upon it. Around the walls were fine pictures, works of the old masters, and the ceiling was decorated with frescos. The spaces between the panellings were filled with long mirrors which multiplied the beauties and size of the room, and, as he walked to the end of it where the queen sat, the stately figure of the old duke was repeated in them again and again until it seemed to Margaretta that an indefinite number of imposing prime ministers were coming toward her.

Margaretta was just a little afraid of the

duke, and as he stood bowing before her she almost regretted having made that promise to Marjorie which bound her to intercede in her father's behalf.

The queen was sitting in a large high-gabled chair, with her feet on a foot-stool. If it had not been for this prop they must have dangled in the air in a most unqueenlike way, for the chair was very large and Margaretta small. At her right hand was a massive carved table, on which were writing materials, a large silver inkstand, pen tray and the like, and the duke placed some papers on it before he sat down on the chair that a servant placed for him opposite the queen.

The duke began by making inquiries as to Her Royal Highness's health, which, never robust, had lately given occasion for alarm. He seemed in no great haste to begin upon the business which had necessitated this interview; for, simple as Margaretta was, she knew he had not come to the palace merely to make inquiries as to her health.

The truth was that Margaretta did not dread the interview any more than the duke himself dreaded it; but how was she to know that? Every instinct of his heart rebelled against the task before him. As has been previously stated, he had loved Margaretta's father and grandfather, and now he loved her. Not so much, perhaps, as if she had been a boy, in which case Duke Otto of Cohentz would have no shadow of a claim upon the crown of Avaril, and though he could not have withdrawn from public life, yet the evening of his days would be untroubled by such cares and anxieties as pressed so heavily upon him now. Yet Margaretta's sex, youth and helplessness stirred that chivalry that dwells in the breast of every true man; he pitied the royal child, realizing that it was not an easy destiny that confronted her as Queen of Avaril.

"Your Majesty has been instructed," began the old minister at last, "that for reasons of state, for the good of the people, personal sacrifices will often be demanded of you. Destiny

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has placed the happiness of millions of souls in your hands — "

The duke paused, and Margaretta looked curiously down upon those little hands, as if she thought they might be holding that great burden that he spoke of, like a doll.

What right, after all, had the nation to so fill them, small, soft and helpless as they were? The duke's face wore an unwonted air of sadness as, surprised at his silence, Margaretta suddenly looked up into it.

" Oh, I will be good," she cried, thinking that her uncheerful submission to his decree was the cause of his sorrow. " I will cry no more for poor Blanco; I will remember my oath. I will always place the nation's welfare before my own happiness, as a good queen should."

The old duke leaned forward, taking her hands in his.

" Margaretta," he said, and his voice was wonderfully gentle, the queen thought, " there is something noble in your nature which, no doubt,

you have inherited from your father and your father's father, that I think will ever respond to the call of heroic self-sacrifice. But I wish to tell you that no one regrets the necessity of such sacrifices more than the old man who so often demands them of you."

For a moment he looked at her silently, then, bending his proud old head, he pressed a kiss on either pale cheek.

In a moment, however, he resumed his usual manner, and with calm determination went on with the matter in hand. This tenderness, however, which betrayed the feeling that formerly had been unsuspected by her, helped Margaretta to bear the trouble that was to come.

This was the removal of old Hedwig from the royal palace.

The old woman was garrulous and foolish, talking of what she should not, unwittingly, to the young queen's injury. The measure was wise, but its necessity was not apparent to little Margaretta.

"Blanco, and now Hedwig," she murmured.

"Remember that it will be for the woman's good," said the duke, encouragingly.

"Then she is not to be put out of the way as Blanco was?"

"Heaven forbid," answered the old minister, smiling. "She will return to her native village to live with her own people. She will be comfortably pensioned. I have brought with me," he went on, looking toward the table, "some papers on which I must have the royal signature and among them is one which makes provision for the queen's nurse. Will Your Majesty sign it?"

The shrewd old diplomat was not altogether ignorant, it appears, of a child's heart. Margaretta, with a faint smile on her little pale face, went obediently to the table and standing by the duke's side signed her name in the places he indicated. It gave her a pleasant feeling of importance that since her coronation certain court papers would not be valid without her signature, and it was a matter of pride

that her penmanship should be at its best on these, the first documents on which it should appear.

She stood with one leg tightly wound round the other, the royal tongue protruding a little, and every feature working as she laboriously inscribed each letter.

When Margaretta had written her name in full upon all the papers, she sat down again rather wearily.

"Is Your Majesty ill?" asked the duke, who was gathering up and tying together the documents.

"No, Your Grace, but I am very tired," the queen answered.

He eyed her closely from under frowning brows. Margaretta's bright head lay against the high gable of her chair, her face gleaming white upon the darkness of the wood.

Blue circles were under her eyes, and a diamond tear or two hung upon her heavy lashes. She looked neither well nor happy, and her appearance could but remind him of

the discouraging account the court physician had given him of her health.

Now, all his hopes for Avaril depended upon the life of this frail little girl; for, according to the laws of descent, in case of her death, the crown would pass to Otto of Cohentz, and the interests of this little duchy on the northern border had always been opposed to her own.

So important, therefore, was the health of Margaretta that previously he had determined to remove her from Marll in the hope that it might be restored by change of air. The plan had been given up because of a rumor that the Ottoists were scheming to seize the queen's person, but now so urgently did the need of some remedy for her press upon him that he persuaded himself that with a guard she could safely be taken to a certain pleasure palace on the sea coast, or to an old castle in the interior, where the late king sometimes passed the summer months. The choice between these two resorts he now left to Margaretta.

Unfortunately, the little queen had conceived a dislike to both. Moreover, she did not wish to leave Marll. In Marll was the garden which, as she told him, she loved better than any other spot in the world, and though Hedwig and Blanco would be there no more, the water-fall was left.

Perhaps it struck the prime minister that a child whose only companion and friend is a water-fall is very forlorn, for he said, kindly: —

"If it is Your Majesty's wish to remain here, that matter is decided, and I wish with all my heart that your old nurse could be left with you also, but as that is impossible, I beg Your Majesty to suggest some way by which I can contribute to your pleasure."

Margaretta shook her head and sighed. She knew that her heart's desire, which was for the natural pleasures of childhood, were not for the Queen of Avaril, and such possessions as a child prizes were already hers.

If she were minded to amuse herself with toys, there was a room in the palace filled

with the most beautiful ones that are made. Outside the palace were tennis courts, croquet grounds, bowling alleys, and the like. Her Majesty had a bicycle and a pet pony, to say nothing of the royal coach in which she and the countess drove every pleasant afternoon. Her boudoir was furnished in the daintiest taste, and there she could read her favorite books, all bound in white and gold, or she could write at a satin-wood desk of exquisite workmanship, well fitted up with all such articles as are used in writing. Margaretta's notes were written on scented, cream-colored paper, with the royal arms in crimson and gold, and the ink was dried with gold dust.

When they were sealed with the flying dragon of Avaril, she had but to ring a bell, and a little page in blue and silver would take the note on a silver tray to the queen's private messenger, who would jump on his white horse and away with it. One sometimes saw him clattering through the streets of Marll,

now and then blowing a silver trumpet to clear the way, as if the missive he bore were the most important state document.

As for personal ornaments, Margaretta's jewel boxes left nothing to be desired. In this lovely boudoir was a cunningly wrought cabinet, inlaid with amber and verdegris, muscadine-scented, with numerous cupboards and drawers.

This was filled with valuable trinkets, with curious, carved ivory combs, and fans, with carved amber in bracelet or amulet. There were necklaces of all sorts, little jewelled daggers, chatelaines, lockets, silver clasps, studded with priceless gems, ornaments from India, from Egypt and Japan. In this cabinet, too, were the magnificent jewels that she had inherited from her mother, — diamonds and emeralds, sapphires and pearls, jewels enough to cover from head to foot this little miniature queen. No wonder she could only shake her head in reply to the duke's question. Hardly had she done so, however, when the thought

flashed upon her that here was the very opportunity she desired to ask for the release of Marjorie's father.

"Your Majesty will honor me with a request," said the duke, with a smile, reading the expression of her face aright.

"Ah, yes," answered the little queen. "I have thought of something which would give me great pleasure."

"This morning when I was in the garden, Your Grace," she began, "a little girl begged me to have her father, who has been imprisoned here, set free. She seemed to think that because I am the queen I can do this."

"Did she tell you her father's name?" asked His Grace.

Margaretta, pronouncing the name of Marjorie's father, saw the vexed color spring into the duke's face.

"Does Your Majesty know," he said, "on what charge this man has been imprisoned? For treason against the government; therefore I am compelled to refuse you, but I trust

Your Majesty will prefer another request that by good fortune I can grant."

But Margaretta, naturally discouraged, shook her head, and, notwithstanding the duke's urging, remained silent. Convinced at last of the uselessness of persistence, he rose and bowed himself out of the royal presence, a punctiliousness that seemed but to mock the helplessness of the poor young queen.

CHAPTER X

MARGARETTA accepted as final the duke's answer in regard to the American who had been imprisoned on his arrival at Marll. Few persons would be so stupid as to believe that the old minister's yea would ever turn into nay, or his nay into yea. She gave the matter up, as in duty bound, but after the interview was over she wished that she had asked permission to send a letter to Marjorie, expressing her sorrow and disappointment that she could not help her.

The request might yet be made to the countess, but a happy instinct told Margaretta not to mention the matter to her.

To begin with, she would have been very indignant that this little girl had presumed to speak to the queen, for the countess was a born aristocrat, having come of a race as ancient as the royal family itself, and she had a horror of

what she called the *canaille*. Undoubtedly she would have scouted the idea that by reason of being an American, Marjorie was a princess, and would have declared that she belonged to the masses,— the great thieving, swearing, sweating, brutal masses. These are not the countess's adjectives, but such alone as will convey her idea of the class to which the Westbrooks belonged.

Up to a certain point the countess had complete authority in all matters relating to the education of the queen. Sometimes she attempted to go beyond that point or sometimes the boundary line did not seem clearly made out, when there would be a terrible conflict between her and the prime minister. It would be open war, for the countess had no talent for diplomacy. It was for that reason that she seldom got her own way, Von Boum not being a man to be browbeaten into a measure by a woman, — an ugly one at that, heaven save the mark!

Though of an imposing figure, the face of

the old countess was plain to a degree. In truth, it was of such exaggerated ugliness, with eyes sunken beneath scraggy brows, with boldly projecting nose and chin, the point of the nose turning downward, the chin upward, and a patch of bright crimson on the high cheek bones, as to make it seem like an ugly mask.

Margaretta's first governess had been English, and for the first five years of her life she spoke entirely in the English language. Then a Frenchwoman, Madame de la Grange, had taken the place of the English one, though the latter still remained at the palace.

Of all her numerous instructors — indeed, of all the ladies of the royal household — there was not one for whom the queen had such affection as she had for Madame.

The French governess was the very opposite in every respect of the Countess of Barnstetter. She was amiable, sympathetic, sensible, witty, and possessed of that tact which conquers alike high and low. No one ever suspected

her of aspiring to influence the powers that be. Yet, this dark, plain, rather dumpy little woman (possessed, however, of a power of fascination which more than offset her plainness and her dumpiness) had effected many a measure that Von Boum and the countess imagined had its origin in their own fertile brains. She played one off against the other in a way that was masterly. Dozens of poor young men had found their way to good governmental positions through the scheming of this clever lady, and many a pretty girl was presented at court to the wonder of every one but Madame.

In books, persons with this sort of ability usually figure as villains and get all the hard names, but Madame's heart was in the right place, and she had accomplished a deal of good in her day.

She was no aristocrat; her sympathies went out to the whole human race, irrespective of one's position in society, and she abhorred the etiquette of the court. Of a truth, the royal palace at Marll was unspeakably dull, and

'tis no wonder that she longed for her gay Paree.

It was to Madame that Margaretta at last confided the story that Marjorie had told her and the prime minister's refusal of her request. Madame listened with sympathy, which was all Margaretta looked for, never dreaming that she had any power to help her.

The apathetic little queen became quite excited in describing the incident, which in reality was quite as much out of the common course of things for her as for Marjorie. So clever, so amusing a creature, she averred, it had never been her good fortune to meet.

"Ah me!" cried Margaretta, in a rueful tone, "I am sure that *she* is never taken to task for moping, but then, — but then she is not a *queen*."

"*Pauvre petite reine!*" murmured the Frenchwoman, thinking that were she the countess, Her August Majesty would soon be cured of moping. As it was, — Madame shrugged her shoulders.

As the desire to help the royal child grew in her heart, a plan grew also in her brain, and she but waited her time. Happily, it was not long in coming.

It happened that one day, on meeting her by accident in one of the antechambers of the palace, the duke bethought him that in the matter of the queen's health the ideas of a woman who had reared eight children of her own into robust manhood or womanhood might be more serviceable than those of the childless countess. In fact, the remedies the countess had suggested had all been tried in vain, as had those also of divers eminent physicians; and now he turned to Madame for help, reassuring himself with the thought of those sturdy sons and daughters who called her mamma.

"The account Dr. Worden gives of the queen's condition is not encouraging," he began. "What, in Madame's opinion, is the cause of Her Majesty's ill health?"

"The life she leads is not healthful. Nature

will not be tricked into making a woman of a child," Madame answered promptly, overjoyed at the opportunity fate had given her. "The queen droops, for at eleven years of age, Your Grace, we need diversion."

"Undoubtedly, Madame, but has not every means of amusement that has ever been devised for a child been provided for the queen?"

"What the queen needs is an amusing playfellow; not another dog to remind her of the one she grieves for, but something new and funny,—a parrot, a flying squirrel, a little monkey, but preferably a little monkey of the human kind. Ah, Your Grace, a child of her own age would cure the queen."

The duke frowned. He did not wish to explain the jealousy and ill feeling of the noble families which would make the choice from one of them of a companion for the queen a most delicate matter. Madame, however, knew perfectly well what was in his mind. She had not studied the politics of Avaril for nothing. She smiled her slow and irresistible smile as she continued:—

"A child of the people, I mean, who knows well how to romp, who will make the queen forget, for a time, the formalities of the court, which are benumbing all her energies, which have checked the overflow of vital power so natural to her age. If the evil influence continues longer, I do not doubt that her health will be too seriously impaired to make recovery possible. It is most fortunate for Queen Margaretta that Your Grace has recognized the true nature of her malady in time, — that it is mental rather than physical."

Madame bowed. Her manner was perfect, so innocent and gracious, so entirely without conceit, so deferential, in fact, that the duke was impressed with the belief that he himself had discovered the cause of the queen's illness.

"But this little companion, — a child from the masses, a peasant, a gipsy, what would the countess say to such a child introduced into the royal palace?" he asked.

Madame shrugged her shoulders.

"It is true the question of caste is very

important to the countess; but a little girl, so humble, will hardly seem to her to belong to the human family, any more than would the parrot or the monkey. She will never be seen by the queen or the countess except in the garden. Above all, she will never be seen with Her Majesty in public. Her existence will hardly be suspected, and will be the subject of no remark. That is," said Madame, "if Your Grace does me the honor to leave the matter in my hands."

"It could be entrusted to none more able," said the duke, bowing low; for he recognized a fellow diplomat in the French governess.

He was not ill-pleased that she should manage the countess, and he did not realize that she had also managed the prime minister.

CHAPTER XI

THE little girls at the orphanage were folding up their work, and upon nearly two hundred samplers the letter R was embroidered daintily enough for the queen's own linen. While the girls worked, the teacher in charge imparted to them a vast amount of information, for these were the most highly instructed orphans in the world. Sleep, for them, was the only escape from exercises for the acquirement of knowledge. Even at meal-time the wheel never stopped, and a new dish was a new lesson, in which they must learn about everything that entered into its composition.

The queen's orphans were not of the poorest class, but for the most part were children of teachers in the schools, of clergymen, and the like, and you would know that they were by their aptitude in these intellectual exercises. There was Adelaide, for instance, who would seize a

new fact as a dog does a bone, carry it off to some spot where she could struggle with it unobserved, burying any remaining portion in a safe hiding place, to which she would repair again and again until the whole had become part and parcel of herself. Many of these girls belonged to that rather rare type called thoughtful children. They would sit quietly for a long time, lost in meditation, as it appeared, and then propound some deep question.

Being very imitative, and also of the conviction that when in Rome you should do as the Romans do, Marjorie now and then tried her hand in this sort. Conquering her natural restlessness, she would sit with her cheek in her hand, her eyes gazing intently upon vacancy. Then sighing deeply, she would look up and ask some such question as: —

"Why do leaves grow on trees instead of trees on leaves?"

Alas, she was not profound, poor Marjorie.

After the samplers were put away the

children all went out into the playground, a great square space surrounded by prim lime trees, that somehow or other had the effect of being charity-orphan lime trees. Because it was recreation time it should not be inferred that they were to be left to themselves, for their games were often conducted by some older person in such a way as to instil more information into their crowded little heads.

Some of the children now arranged themselves as the bodies of our solar system. A golden-haired little maid represented the sun, and eight others revolved around her, representing Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. It was very cleverly done, for each child kept the true orbit of her planet; that is, the relative distance from the sun, and, also, at the same time revolved upon her own axis. Around each planet revolved smaller children, as moons or satellites. It fairly made one dizzy to look at them.

Other children grouped themselves as stars

in the signs of the zodiac, in Vega, the Harp, the Great Bear, the Dipper, those star-outlined figures that we love to trace at night on the mysterious roof of our great world-house. Those children who were too young or too stupid to place themselves with the necessary exactness in the constellations became stars in the Milky Way, which crossed the schoolyard with a grand sweep, and these had no part to play other than to bob continually up and down in the fashion of people in bathing, — to give the impression of twinkling, perhaps.

As this was visitors' day, and the Queen's Orphanage was a very popular charity, a good many persons were looking on from under the lime trees. There was a constant murmur among them and such exclamations as: —

"How charming! How very pretty! and so instructive, you know. What an admirable charity!"

As to the spectacle being a pretty one, the visitors were quite right about that. Imagine three hundred little boys and girls, serious lit-

tle blonde creatures mostly, in quaint costumes and with perfect order, forming these figures upon the dark green of the shady playground.

As long as Marjorie lived, whenever she thought of the heavenly bodies, she would recall this scene, and often in her own dear country when she was no longer a child, at least in years, she would look up into that starry universe, that, with its beauty and mystery, awes even the gay Marjories of this life, and say: —

"Poor, learned little orphans, where in this great world are they all wandering now?"

And she would comfort herself with the thought that He who keeps the stars each in its own safe orbit will keep us every one in ours, and that we can never wander beyond the reach of His knowledge and law.

The children danced to a little jig-like tune, singing rhymes which neatly summed up their astronomical knowledge. Sometimes those rhymes were in their own language, but more

often they were in French or English. For instance, the children forming the signs of the zodiac sang the lines so familiar to English-speaking children all over the world: —

"The Ram, the Bull, the Heavenly Twins,
And next the Crab the Lion shines,
The Virgin, and the Scales.
The Scorpion, Archer, and He-goat,
The man that bears the watering pot,
And Fish with glittering scales,"

which they pronounced very queerly.

"The Scorpion, Archer, and He-goat,
The man that bears the watering *poat*,"

in particular sent Marjorie into fits of laughter.

Although the game was pretty, it was extremely monotonous, and after awhile Marjorie slipped out of the Milky Way to talk to Adelaide, who, as monitor, was stationed at the edge of the playground.

"Do n't you think," she said, "the game would be nicer if Earth, or Neptune, or one of those stupid planets should run away and have to be chased back again by the constellations and the stars of the Milky Way?"

"They could n't, you know," answered the wise Adelaide. "They are all held in place by gravitation."

"What is that?" asked Marjorie.

"Did you never hear of the *law of gravitation?*" asked Adelaide, much shocked. "Then I must try to tell you about it."

"No, no. *Please* do n't tell me, Adelaide; at least, not *now*. I do so hate to mix lessons with play. Maybe I could stand it if play was mixed with lessons, but somehow they never seem to give us *that* mixture, do they?"

"You had better go back and twinkle in the Milky Way," advised Adelaide. "The matron is looking at you."

"Well, I 'm not too good to be looked at," Marjorie answered, jauntily. "Who is that lady, Adelaide, who is with her, and who seems to be looking at me, too?"

"Why, it 's Madame la Grange, the French governess of the queen. I wonder what she has come here for?" said Adelaide; then

recollecting that the actions of such high, or, at least, comparatively high, persons did not concern Marjorie and herself, she immediately added: "You had better go right back to your place in the Milky Way."

"But I *am* so tired of twinkling," Marjorie objected. "Have we got to go on playing this — if you call it play — as long as the visitors are here? I do wish they would go. Why, Adelaide, I do believe that the matron is bringing the queen's governess here."

"Go and twinkle; oh, do go and twinkle!" whispered Adelaide, in agony.

"No, I won't twinkle. I 'm going to be a comet."

And so saying, Marjorie started off at full speed, her hair flying, her arms whirling, and her long, full-skirted frock blowing out in the breeze. Away she ran, dashing through constellation after constellation, even ruthlessly destroying our own solar system, then back through the Milky Way, straight into the arms of the horrified matron.

The heavenly bodies were completely disorganized by this unparalleled proceeding in the game, and gathered around her, open-eyed, as she stood panting in the matron's firm grasp.

"Why do you behave so?" the matron asked, reproachfully. "You promised me to be good."

"But as this is only a game, what 's the harm?" Marjorie cried, sadly puzzled by the circumspection expected of one in play-time.

"You see how it is, Madame," said the matron, turning to the queen's governess, who stood beside her, looking on with bright brown eyes. "You now see for yourself that what I told you is true. Do you dare to try the experiment you spoke of? I would advise you to make a different choice. There is Adelaide, for instance —"

Madame's eyes followed those of the speaker, which rested upon the prim figure of the monitor, and she shook her head. Then she put her hand on the shoulder of the culprit, saying: —

"Let me talk with this one a moment. I can soon decide."

Madame drew Marjorie to a seat under one of the lime trees, and when they were quite alone she said: —

"I have brought you a message from the queen, *ma petite*."

"Then my father is free," exclaimed Marjorie, jumping up and clapping her hands.

"No. The queen can do nothing for your father, — that 's an affair of state — "

She would have explained further, but Marjorie cried out, impatiently: —

"A queen, — a queen, and cannot do a little thing like that. Why did they proclaim her a queen and give her all those high titles, if she really is of no account at all? "

"*Chut, petite drôle!* Remember you are not in the 'land of the free.' Use thy good sense, and consider that at eleven years one is not able to steer the ship of state. Come now, let us forget about all that. If he is innocent of the charge for which he has been arrested, your papa will be liberated. In that case, I am sure he has no fears for himself. If

he worries, it is about his *chère petite fille*,— *n'est-ce pas?*"

Marjorie was forced to admit that this was probably the case.

"Yes, yes. I know that is so," she said, soberly. "He fears, no doubt, that I will get myself into trouble, and, indeed, it is difficult for me to be patient and obedient,—to be, in fact, like them."

She waved her hand toward the orphans, reassembled into the figures of the constellations and moving puppet-like in their so-called game.

"They are always like that," she went on. "They cannot *really* play. Yesterday I thought we would have a fine time playing coronation, but, Madame, you should have seen them. I was the queen; they would have it so, and Adelaide was the prime minister. That is Adelaide, Madame, on the edge of the playground, and indeed, you should have seen her. Instead of holding herself like this,"— here Marjorie stood up with her back

straight, her stomach out, and her chin high in the air, by some strange magic succeeding with every inch of her body in suggesting the proud old diplomat, — "and instead of walking like this," she continued (assuming the very gait of the prime minister, moving her head stiffly from side to side, as if looking upon crowds of people with a glance that said, "off with his head"), "Adelaide would look *so*."

And now Marjorie suddenly became the very meekest of little charity girls, with a creep-mouse air and meek eyes which seemed to say, "Please, marm, excuse me for being alive."

"*Vraiment*, the little American will soon cure the queen of her melancholy," thought Madame. "Come, come," she said aloud, "you have not heard the queen's message."

Marjorie sat down again upon the bench, declaring dismally: —

"If she is not going to help papa, I do n't care for her message."

"But your papa must be pleased to have

you leave the orphanage," Madame persisted. "*Ecoutez, mon enfant.* I have come to take you to the royal palace. The little queen's spirits droop and a playfellow has been prescribed."

"To take me to the royal palace?" Marjorie naturally exclaimed. "Why, I should n't know how one is expected to behave there."

"I will instruct you as to that; you will do very well," Madame assured her.

"I always wished to know what palaces are like, and I 've no doubt it would be great fun, but you see, while papa is obliged to stay in a prison, I should n't enjoy myself much in a palace."

Madame nodded her head slowly twice or thrice, as if with a thorough understanding of Marjorie's feeling. She took one of the little girl's hands in hers, and seemed all sympathy and affection.

"Quite natural, my child, but foolish. We know that *le bon* papa will be happier when you are no longer a member of this excellent

establishment. *Mon Dieu*, it is not the place for a child as eccentric as a comet."

"But is the palace?" enquired Marjorie, laughing.

"How sharp you are, little one," cried Madame, laughing and pinching Marjorie's chin. "Liberties are always allowed to the king's jester. Come, come, my child, I assure you that you will do very well."

In short, she was so reassuring on this point and set forth so eloquently the need the queen had of just such a companion, that at last Marjorie consented to go with her to the palace.

CHAPTER XII

WHEN Marjorie was first introduced into that august circle, Queen Margaretta and her suite were sitting on the upper terrace of the palace garden. No doubt it was as awkward a moment as she had ever experienced, but she followed Madame's instructions to the letter and was at last duly installed in office as playfellow-in-chief to the queen.

On the very instant, however, that it became Marjorie's bounden duty to amuse she felt as dull, — well, as dull as one of the court ladies herself, which is to say, as dull as any one could possibly be. Adelaide herself could have been no duller.

Save by the queen and Madame, she was regarded much as if she were indeed some strange, fantastic being of another, and probably lower, order of creation, and perhaps Marjorie, on her part, had a feeling that these

elegant and languid persons, who looked at her so curiously, were unrelated to the great human family to which she herself belonged.

The queen's suite was grouped in an irregular semicircle in the cool blue shadow of the palace, their light or richly colored garments glowing against the sombre gray color of the stone. Beyond, in the shimmer of the sunshine, lay the lovely palace garden, and over all spread the deep blue of the sky, whereon floated soft white clouds, as stately as swans.

In the centre of the semicircle were two high-backed arm-chairs, one occupied by the little white-robed queen, as sweet and pure as the lilies that grew in ranks along the terraces. In the other sat the old countess, setting off by her withered face, with its mirthless black eyes, and her sombre-hued drapery, the fairness and freshness of Margaretta.

On a low bench on the left of the queen they had placed Marjorie. She had been attired by Madame in a costume so gay and fantastic as to indicate in itself the part the

wearer was to play. Her dress was made of some thin, silky stuff of dark blue, with a border of bright colors around the hem, and a soft dull-red sash, with little bells on the ends, tied across the hips. This Frenchy costume was finished by a cap of dark blue with a red aigrette, which was perched as daintily on Marjorie's head as a bird on the topmost branch of a tree. Madame and the English governess, a sentimental-looking lady in pink attire, who had been reading from a book of poems in her native language, sat on the one side of the countess, and at the opposite end of the half-circle were the two ladies-of-honor. The first of these was a lovely blonde in delicate green, whose slim white fingers were twanging a harp. The other was a dark beauty, her black eyes and rich complexion set off by a wonderful amber-colored gown, the long train curling beyond the shadow-edge into the sunshine, and against that amber background glistened the iridescent plumes of a peacock.

When Lady Wilhelmina sang, which she did in a sweet, feeble voice, one hardly dared breathe lest it might overpower the music, and her repertoire was limited, for it is difficult to find many songs in which there are neither high notes nor low ones. Sometimes the English governess read or recited in her native language, which was understood by all the court, but it must be confessed that the Queen of Avaril's suite was not an amusing company. One's mind was too much occupied by the rules of etiquette, and then the countess disapproved of wit.

Madame used often to say (of course to herself): "Alas! to laugh is dangerous for aristocrats. It makes one human."

The countess thought that laughter was vulgar, and said it should be suppressed in society, like sneezing.

Although her fastidiousness made conversation difficult, in deference to her idea of propriety, the ball must be kept rolling, and that is probably the reason why so many stupid speeches were made by Margaretta's ladies.

There had been an awkward halt in the conversation after Marjorie had taken her place at Margaretta's side, and the ladies began to look anxious. Then the English governess, waving her hand toward the garden, exclaimed: —

"Ah, what is so rare as a day in June?"

As her eyes were fixed upon the stranger,— probably from curiosity,— Marjorie believed the question had been addressed to herself, and after a moment's reflection, replied: —

"Why, *another* day in June, I suppose."

"Quite right," said the countess, "but conundrums are vulgar. I never guessed one in my life. In truth, in my young days they were never asked by persons of refinement, but, dear me, times are changed. Altogether too much latitude is allowed in conversation now, I think."

"I always disliked latitude," observed the English governess, eager to reinstate herself in the good opinion of the countess.

"The world and even the courts of Europe

have degenerated," went on the old aristocrat. "Persons of the lower class have squeezed in because of their wealth or because they were *geniuses!* mere geniuses!"

"How shocking!" murmured Lady Wilhelmina.

"And the tradespeople are growing even more mercenary. They no longer care to give you a good article for your money. Therefore, nothing that one uses is as good as it used to be."

"Alas, yes," assented Madame, her brown eyes twinkling. "*Les miroirs, pour exemple.* I have observed, as you say, they grow uglier each year."

The countess, who disliked jokes of this sort, now observed that the sun made her head ache, and she should retire to her own apartments. Before leaving the circle, however, she bade the queen take a walk in the garden, ordering Marjorie to attend her.

When the children were safely hidden by the trees from the upper terrace, Marjorie put

her arm around the queen's waist, and Margaretta's arm slipped as naturally around Marjorie's neck as if she had had playmates all her life.

They might have been two little girls in Biddeford coming from school.

"Ah me," said the little queen, in ecstasy, "how did it ever happen that you got to the palace?"

"I don't know," Marjorie answered, laughing, "except that Madame came to the orphanage for me and brought me here."

"But it's *nice*," said the queen, as if that was reason enough why it should not have occurred. "Nothing like it ever happened before."

"And I have so many things to tell and to ask you that I didn't have a chance for the last time I was here."

"Tell me one of them right now," begged Margaretta.

"Well, do you know that you and I have the same birthday. Isn't that strange?"

The queen nodded and laughed.

"It almost makes us relations. It 's as good as being second cousins at the very least."

"I do n't know that I should be glad that you were born under my sign," Margaretta said. "Hedwig says that it 's a very *unfortunate* sign."

"Hedwig is greatly mistaken then, for I 'm always lucky. People are always telling me that I was born under a *lucky star*, and as you were born on the same day, of course yours must be lucky, too."

"How are you lucky?" asked Margaretta.

"Oh, well, papa is so good to me, and we go about so much, and something is always happening. I should n't like to jog-trot along always in the same way. Even the trouble we have had here in Avaril will seem amusing when it 's over, papa says."

"Did he say that?" the little queen cried in surprise.

"Yes, before he went off with the gendarmes, you know, and he told me to be patient, for it

would all come out right in the end, and above all, not to be a coward, and I won't, not if they burn me at the stake," cried Marjorie, valiantly.

"I 'm sure of that," said the little queen, kissing her.

"But of all the queer things that have *ever* happened to me, this is the queerest, — being kissed by a queen and " (returning the caress) "kissing one."

So long and heartily Marjorie laughed that Margaretta joined in, but long before her companion had ceased to amuse herself with this joke (for it was always Marjorie's way to make the most of one), she became serious again.

"I suppose a great many things happen to people if they are not queens," she said, when Marjorie's hilarity was over.

"Papa says that I have had an unusually checkered career," Marjorie replied. "I do n't suppose there is a girl in Biddeford that has ever had anything happen to her at all like this that is happening to *me* now. It 's very strange."

A sense of the unreality of all around her swept over Marjorie. The figure of the queen seemed to grow dimmer and dimmer until she feared it would vanish altogether. Was there really and truly any such place as Avaril? She might have believed her recent experiences a strange dream, if Margaretta's hand had not suddenly been placed on her knee, while she asked with convincing distinctness for a description of the events that had made Marjorie's career so remarkable.

"The first adventure that I can remember happened a great while ago," Marjorie began, with her usual good humor. "I was at Kennebunkport with my aunt, and I ran down to the wharf to play. There was a ship about to sail, and how I ever got on it without being seen, I do n't know, but anyhow I did, and was carried off to sea by a lot of jolly old tars, — sailors, you know. They were bound for Nova Scotia and I had the loveliest voyage you can imagine, for they were all devoted to me. I was obeyed as if I were a queen, or rather a

prime minister. They told me perfectly lovely stories that just made my hair stand on end. If I thought of one of those ghastly tales at night I had only to scream and one of the sailors would come and sit by me and make me forget it. How? Oh, by telling me another that was worse. I gave the people at home a great scare that time."

"I should think so," said Margaretta, striving, not very successfully, to imagine what such an adventure would be like. "I hope you did n't meet with any storms."

"Did n't we, though? A terrible one struck us the second day out."

"And were n't you frightened?"

"Oh, a little at first," she replied, passing lightly over the terror of that time. "You must remember it was n't a *steamer* that we were in, but a sailing vessel, a schooner, perhaps. The sailors told me there was n't a bit of danger. They wrapped me up in tarpaulin and took me on deck, because I was sick in the little cabin. And after awhile I got over

being afraid of the storm and liked it. My, how we dashed over the great waves that every now and then washed the deck. Oh, it was splendid! I felt like a — like a — "

"An eagle," suggested the queen, who was listening, with eyes as big as saucers.

"Well, an eagle," said Marjorie. "At all events, something that's very bold and dashing, and not at all like a frightened, seasick girl. It seemed as if there was n't anything in the world but winds and waves."

"Yes, that was a truly delightful adventure," Marjorie said, having listened to Margaretta's comments. "The next thing I did was to run away with a circus troupe. At that time my great ambition was to dance on the tight-rope, and I was awfully in love with the bear-tamer. I admired him more than any person I had ever seen."

"I should have supposed he would have been rather an ignorant person," interposed the queen, whose little brain was whirling.

"He was n't ignorant about *bear-taming*.

And my, was n't he a big fellow, and handsome. His chest was as wide as *that*." Marjorie stopped in the middle of the path and stretched her arms apart as far as they would go. "His voice was as deep as a giant's, and he rolled his r's so when he talked, you might fancy it was thunder."

"Well, go on," said the queen. "What next?"

"I can't go on, because our caravan was overtaken by the police," said Marjorie, laughing. "Was n't it a shame? And the circus people got into trouble for taking me off, which I never did think was fair, for I was as anxious to go with them as they were to have me. But perhaps it was just as well for me, as I believe I should have got tired of the bear-tamer. You see, in the caravan, I found out that his breath smelled horribly of onions. I never could stand that."

"Of course, after we came abroad, I had many more adventures, but I never had any other as good as *this*. Fancy, yesterday I

was a charity orphan and to-day I 'm a resident of the royal palace and playfellow to the queen." She gave Margaretta a little hug. "But there is *one* thing that has happened to you that has never happened to me. I have never been *crowned*."

"If you were, 't would be the last adventure you would ever have," said the little queen, dryly.

Marjorie shook her head, laughing.

"I should travel about *incog*. Royal persons do that sometimes. There was Peter the Great — of Russia, you know. It was when he was travelling *incog*. that he first saw the empress, only she was a washerwoman then and *not* an empress. I 'm very fond of history. It 's my favorite study, but I like the parts about kings and queens, — not battles. Do you intend," said Marjorie, lowering her voice and leaning eagerly forward, for they were now both seated upon the stone bench by the waterfall, "do you think you will make war very often?"

After a moment's reflection Margaretta declared her preference for a peaceful reign.

"But you know," she said, "I may have to, for I have sworn to defend the independence and the territory of my dominion."

"Yes, I suppose so," Marjorie assented, rather absently. She was looking at the queen in a ruminating way, with her finger on her lip. Presently she turned discreetly away from her, and said: —

"Does n't it make you feel a little, — just a little nervous when you read about Charles the First and Marie Antoinette?"

"Why, no; why should it?" asked Margaretta.

"Well, you know they were beheaded by their subjects."

"That does n't make me nervous, for I am much beloved by my subjects," Margaretta replied, with a confidence that Marjorie suspected was founded upon the assurances of her ladies-in-waiting. "Besides, I shall rule wisely. That is why I am studying the Avaril

code, — which is very stupid. But, as the duke says, 'one is not born a queen simply to amuse one's self.' I shall place the welfare of my subjects before my own happiness. It seems hard, but, after all, it is better to make others happy than to be happy one's self."

"I suppose the duke tells you that also. Well, I am changing my mind a good deal since I came to Avaril. I would n't be a queen if a whole nation were to get on its knees and beg me."

Marjorie snapped her fingers in the imaginary face of a supplicating nation. Then turning to the queen she stroked her little pale cheek, and said: —

"What is it that kings sometimes do when they get tired of reigning? Oh, I know; they *abdicate*. That is what *you* had better do. Abdicate and hand the crown over to the great Boom Boom, telling him that it 's the biggest sort of a nuisance, but it 's better to make others happy than to be happy one's self."

"And do kings and queens *really* ever abdicate? I do not remember reading of any who have done so," said the little queen.

CHAPTER XIII

MARGARETTA settled herself more comfortably upon the stone seat, as if with the expectation of listening to a long list of abdicating sovereigns. As Marjorie could think of but one she wisely made the most she could of him.

"Did Your Majesty never read," she began, "of Charles the Fifth of Spain? He was a very great emperor who gave up all his kingdoms to his son. Yes, *kingdoms;* for he had, as you might say, crowns to burn. First he surrendered his territories in the Low Countries, for in those days the Netherlands belonged to Spain. This he did at the council at Brussels. On one side of him stood his son Philip and on the other side his sister Mary, who had been regent over the country, and Charles recounted all the great things which he had done for the good of his subjects, which seems rather silly of

him. He said he had lived just for their happiness and welfare, and he told them how many times, either in their wars or on other business, he had been obliged to go to Spain, England, Italy, the Low Countries and Africa, and that he never had had any time to rest and enjoy himself. He said he was all worn out, and, therefore, he was going to pass the crown on to his son and retire to a monastery. Then he turned to Philip, declaring that he gave him this crown (that was such a lot of trouble) as an extraordinary proof of affection, and Philip was to show his gratitude by faithful devotion to the people. And he commanded him to be a good, bigoted Catholic, which Philip always was. After that he resigned to him also the crowns of Spain, with all the Spanish possessions, both in Europe and America (though his daughter Joanna was regent while Philip was away at the war), reserving for himself only a little pension. If I were in Your Majesty's place," Marjorie interrupted herself to advise, "I should keep a good fat, comfortable one, for

I don't suppose you intend to imitate Charles so far as to retire from the world. The world, if you haven't a crown, is a very agreeable place, very, and the more money you have I suppose the more agreeable it would be."

"I cannot imitate him in anything," said the queen, who had been listening with dreamy eyes. "You see *he* was worn out with his long reign and all the good he had done, but I have never done anything at all yet for my subjects. Besides, I've no son to leave my crown to."

"Well, I wouldn't want to leave such a bothersome thing to *my* son if I had one. I don't think that would be a very motherly act. I told Your Majesty what to do with your crown."

"What did Charles do next?" asked Margaretta, smiling and gently shaking her head. "Do you remember?"

"Oh, yes, I've read about it many a time in three musty-looking, big black books that my grandfather has in a secretary with glass doors, in his old farmhouse in Maine. What did

Charles do next? He started with a great retinue for Spain. He had with him a lot of major-domos, physicians, chamberlains, and I do n't know what all, whom he intended to take to the monastery to wait on him; for he evidently had no notion of grubbing along like a common monk.

"When he landed in Spain he was said to prostrate himself upon the earth, and exclaim: —

"'Oh, thou common Mother of mankind, naked came I from thy bosom, and naked I return to it.'

"I think I should leave out this part, too. He must have looked rather silly, but he was really in a very humble frame of mind, for when he was invited by the Queen of England to rest himself in her country on his way from the Netherlands to Spain, he refused, saying that it would n't be very agreeable to the queen to receive a visit from a father-in-law who was only a private gentleman."

"Which queen was that?" asked Margaretta.

"It was Bloody Mary. The one who burned so many heretics, as she called us poor Protestants. They say," Marjorie added in a gossipy tone, and indeed she always talked about historical characters as if they were as real to her as her own neighbors. "They say that after all she was n't cruel at heart, but persecuted the heretics from a sense of duty. It 's a pity for any one to be so conscientious as all that, is n't it? For my part, I think she deserved the bad name she got, but 't is an awful one. How would you like to go down in history as *Bloody Margaretta?*"

"Oh!" exclaimed dear little Margaretta, wincing, and Marjorie cried with contrition:—

"There, I 've hurt your feelings again, but I did n't mean anything unpleasant. If you go down in history as a queen at all, which I hope you won't, it will be as the nicest one that ever reigned."

"I 'm glad that *my* country is Protestant," said the Queen of Avaril, comfortably. "I do n't like the Catholics because they persecuted so."

"They persecuted the Protestants." Marjorie exclaimed with a wise air. "When the people became Protestants they persecuted each other, that's all the difference. Oh, yes, *we* have done a lot of it, too. We threw Bunyan into prison (where he wrote 'Pilgrim's Progress,' you know). We banished, imprisoned, or put to death lots of good people for nothing at all. Why, we would crop off a man's ears, or slit his nose as quick as we would wink."

"Ah," said Margaretta, "you must have read all those books in that old secretary you spoke of."

"Well, no. I never read 'The Diary of Amos Lawrence,' and only a few pages of 'Life and Speeches of Henry Clay,'" Marjorie admitted. "But I read all of Hume and Macaulay (History of England, you know), the interesting parts a great many times. I read a good deal of 'Poems of Robert Burns,' and most of Mrs. Hemans. She was a poet, too, but not one of the boss poets; and Shakespeare."

"More poems, I suppose."

"No, *plays*, all full of murderers, ghosts, friars, clowns, fairies, and the most beyewtiful ladies. Sometimes winter evenings, we would read most a whole play, each one taking a part. They always gave me such parts as First Citizen, or Bolário, servant to Polinário," (if memory failed, invention always served with Marjorie) "or some such unimportant person, who would say nothing more than 'No, my lord,' or 'I shall, my liege,' or 'Good sir, that 's news indeed.' It was not that I did n't read well enough, either, but only because Aunt Belinda is so afraid of my being conceited. Oh dear, I wonder where Aunt Belinda is now."

A sadness fell upon her at the mention of that name which checked her gay chatter, but suddenly remembering poor Charles, whom she had left to reach Spain as best he might, she began again as glibly as ever:—

"At every town on his way to Valladolid, which was then the Spanish capital, the emper-

or's cortège was met by people who wished to take a last look at him. The great dignitaries came to do him honor and they had banquets all along the route. Charles pretended that he wanted to escape the crowds, but he seemed to like the refreshments very well.

"When he reached Valladolid," Marjorie went on, "his daughter Joanna gave him a loving welcome. Here he stayed quite a while, receiving the grandees and the ladies of the court, and all who wished to take leave of him. He had to advise the regent, too, about affairs of state, but he finally took leave of her and his little grandson, Don Carlos, and set out for the monastery.

"It was in a rough, mountainous country, and they had to travel on narrow paths that wound around dizzy precipices, the king being carried in a litter, or sometimes in the arms of the peasants, who accompanied the king's party with pikes and shovels to clear the way. And so at last he reached the monastery, and there he stayed all the rest of his life."

"And was n't he ever sorry that he had left his son and his daughter and his little grandson?" asked Margaretta. "And did n't he ever wish that he could get away from the monastery?"

"Well, no. If he had, I suppose he would have gone. Kings and queens — grown-up ones, I mean — have ways of managing things, and Charles was a very great emperor."

"I do n't see how you can remember these things," said Margaretta.

Marjorie laughed. "I 've been that old emperor so many times," she said.

Much mystified, the queen repeated these words, and Marjorie was forced to explain further.

"I always imagine I am the person I 'm reading about. And sometimes, too, when I am not reading, I play that I am some interesting and important person."

"I can never imagine myself any one but Margaretta."

"Dear me, how dreadfully dull it must be,

always to be the same person," exclaimed Marjorie, and she inwardly added, "especially if that person is the little Queen of Avaril."

"Above all," went on the queen, "I could not imagine myself that old emperor."

"Oh, it 's easy enough, except," added Marjorie, with naiveté, "except where you have to write to your son to cherish the Holy Inquisition, — I did find that rather hard. At first I would n't, but pretended that I had repented of persecuting people so. The part I enjoyed most was that where Charles has his funeral services performed. The people gathered about a great coffin in the centre of the chapel, but instead of being in it, Charles, muffled in a black mantle, was taking a conspicuous part in the ceremonies. Poor old thing, he must have been a dreadful crank. No, he never regretted having laid aside his crown, for crowns are cumbersome and sometimes dangerous ornaments, as I once heard a man say."

Marjorie fell into silence, recalling the evil prophecies of the man-in-the-corner. She fer-

vently wished that Margaretta would resign her crown before anything unpleasant occurred. So wise seemed this method of avoiding the sorrows and perils the crown of Avaril might bring that she could not forbear to urge it again upon the little queen.

"You say that you are greatly beloved by your subjects, and that you mean to rule well, but you may have terrible trouble for all that. Subjects are not to be depended upon," she said, in an experienced way. "They let the bad kings trample upon them, and when a good, meek one comes along, they chop off his head. Oh, dearest Margaretta, will you not resign?"

"Then the crown would go to Duke Otto, which would be a great calamity for Avaril, for he has a bad heart and does not love the people. No, I was born to take care of them and must remain on the throne."

"Who knows, dear, sweet little Margaretta, what you were born for? I don't think any one ought to wear a crown if she doesn't want

to. And if you are afraid of the duke, I promise to stand by you to the end. You must n't abdicate, though, until papa is free, for then, you know, you can easily slip off with us. Of course, they will try to find you, but I do n't believe they would ever think of looking in *Biddeford* for a queen."

But again Margaretta shook her head.

"I was born the queen," she said, in her little dignified way.

And Marjorie divined the truth, that she did not wish to be anything else.

"Well," she said, getting up with a business-like air, "I am here to amuse Your Majesty. Let us go and play."

CHAPTER XIV

MARJORIE was in Margaretta's company a portion of each morning, and that she faithfully performed the service expected of her — to raise the spirits of the drooping queen — no one who knew that young person could doubt.

Even the countess was forced to admit that Queen Margaretta's health and spirits had greatly revived since the arrival of her plebeian playfellow.

When off duty, Marjorie perhaps enjoyed herself quite as much with Madame. The Frenchwoman fell in love with her brave little companion, who would not give way to fear and misery, and she helped her to keep up her spirits in every way that she could. All that was worth seeing at the palace, be sure Marjorie saw. Under the conduct of Madame she even entered the queen's boudoir, and beheld

the wonders of that muscadine-scented cabinet, — beheld them, indeed! aye, Madame obligingly turning her back, the crown jewels for a moment adorned the young person from Biddeford, in whose hair and around whose neck sparkled such jewels as only queens wear. Round her arms she wound strings of fair pearls or carved amber beads, fanned herself with a fan worth her father's whole fortune, and her eyes had just fallen upon a tiny dagger with a dozen or more fine rubies in the hilt when Madame returned to her side.

"And what does Her Majesty do with this?" she asked.

"Nothing, my child. It remains with all such trinkets in the cabinet. What could she do with it?"

"Ah me! 't would be so nice when one acts tragedy."

"'T is only we merry creatures who love tragedy," Madame told her. "'T is not to the queen's taste."

Next, Marjorie examined Her Majesty's ward-

robe, and was delighted with its magnificence. There were dresses of state, stiff with jewels, there were the exquisite simple toilettes in which the queen was seen every day, and dresses for walking and driving and even travelling, though, as Marjorie observed, the queen had not much use for travelling dresses.

When Marjorie was shown the room in which were the royal toys she was in ecstasies. Such loads and loads of them there were, and of the most beautiful kinds. She counted over fifty lovely dolls, and did not count all.

"But, you know," she said, turning at last to Madame, "the queen can no more play with a doll than a doll can play with the queen."

As for Marjorie's impression of the palace and the palace people, she shall speak for herself, for she wrote on this subject to her father, as soon as she found that a letter from her would be conveyed to him.

"It was your Marjorie's harlequin ways, as Aunt Belinda calls them, that has raised that foolish creature to an office in the queen's

household," she began, "for I hope you have observed, dear papa, the address at the top of this sheet. Oh, yes, you have read it correctly, — *The Royal Palace*, if you please. Perhaps you think 't is but a joke, but I can tell you it is the solemn truth, and when I say *solemn*, I use just the right word, for a palace is a dreadfully solemn place, and dull, — dull as any farmhouse in Maine.

"Of course you will wish to know more particularly how I ever got here at all. It was through Madame, who thought I would make a merry playfellow for the little queen, who was ill and needed to be amused. The task, as you may think, is exactly suited to me, and I do it with the more pleasure because, if you will believe it, she was never amused before in all her life. At first, dear papa, I could not bear the thought of coming here while you were in that horrid place, but I was sorry for the poor unhappy queen, and I remembered how often you have said that, being such a gay creature myself, my mission in life is to help people to

be cheerful. It is a very nice mission, I think, but oh, how strange it is that any one should need help in such a very easy thing!

"I can assure you that at first I was much dazed at the grandeur of the palace. The magnificent apartments, so spacious and so high, made me feel a very small and unimportant person. The big, high-backed chairs and tables and things all seemed to say: 'A fig for you, little hop-o'-my-thumb! How did you get here, anyhow?'

"The most disagreeable thing that you can imagine was to be presented to the queen's suite. These ladies looked at me in such a strange way and I felt so very awkward that if the chance had been offered to me to go back to the orphanage I would have gone in a minute, and poor Madame must have been dreadfully worried for fear it would be said that such a very stupid girl would never be able to amuse the queen.

"'Ah, *mon enfant*,' she had said to me (meaning to give me courage, no doubt),

'these honorable ladies are but human creatures. *Riez, mon enfant! Chantez, soyez joyeuse. Tout le monde l'attend.*'

"But how could I *riez, chantez*, even if *tout le monde* did expect it, while they looked at me as if I were a paroquet on a perch, or a monkey on a pole?

"I will now describe to you the ladies of the royal household. The highest in rank is an old countess who is very ugly. The point of her nose so nearly meets the point of her chin that I am continually wondering how she manages to eat. She must be obliged to open her mouth very wide, or perhaps she puts her fork in her mouth from the side, which must look odd, to say the least.

"This countess is a pompous, proud and disagreeable person, in whose opinion your Marjorie, strange as you may think it, is no great shakes. Oh dear, oh dear, I truly believe she begrudges the very air I breathe, palace air probably being too good for the likes of me.

"There are two ladies-of-honor who are sweet

things to look at, but are not wits, and there is also an Englishwoman, a governess of the queen, who is the most ridiculous creature you ever saw, and makes me blush for my mother tongue.

"And now, papa, I have saved the best for the last, but my pen, I fear, will never do justice to that good Madame, so clever, so witty and so kind. Ah! she is so good to me, and at night when I lie tossing from one side of the bed to the other, perhaps crying a little, thinking of the trouble that has fallen upon my beloved papa, this dear Madame comes to my bedside to comfort me, and she is so kind, so droll and so mother-like, and is so sure that all will come out right, that after awhile I fall asleep, sometimes waking up again to find her still holding my hand."

CHAPTER XV

IT was very dull in the palace garden with the ladies of the queen's suite. Even the countess yawned behind her fan as she observed for the third time that the weather was warm.

The Englishwoman was fast asleep, her book of poems on the ground beside her. Lady Wilhelmina had laid aside her harp, and Lady Ursula's needle no longer squeaked through the satin on which she had been embroidering dainty devices in divers-colored floss. Even Madame's head nodded occasionally.

Meantime the queen and Marjorie amused themselves in their favorite retreat, — the nook on the Whispering Avenue where they first met.

In imagination, however, they were no longer in the palace garden. They were starv-

ing Pilgrims in the savage wilderness of America. Savage beasts and cruel red-men inhabited for the nonce the smiling court garden. Witches rode overhead. Marjorie was the valiant hero John Smith, and the Queen of Avaril tried to fancy herself the dusky princess Pocahontas; or Marjorie was Miles Standish and Margaretta the coy Priscilla. Then the scenery changed and the court garden became the provincial town of Boston, and the rustic bridge that crossed the little stream, an English ship loaded with taxed tea, which, as defiant colonists, Marjorie and Margaretta vigorously flung overboard. They were in the midst of the stirring scene when the queen suddenly declared that she was faint with the heat. She sat down on the bank by the little stream to fan herself, begging Marjorie search the apparently well-filled storehouse of her memory for some historical event, or life of some historical personage, of a less exciting sort.

"Lady Jane Grey is one of my favorite char-

acters," Marjorie answered. "She was so interesting and pathetic."

"Pathetic?" interrupted the queen, doubtfully. "Well, you might tell me about her while we sit in the shade and rest."

Margaretta lay down on the bank with her leghorn hat for a pillow. Her white dress was dappled with sunshine, but her sweet face was in shadow. She wished the world was not always so full of trouble, but Marjorie, who sat at her ease in the fragrant grass, smacked her lips and began: —

"Henry the Eighth, who had made England a Protestant country, was succeeded by his son, Edward VI. He was a sickly boy, who was persuaded by Archbishop Cranmer to leave his crown to his cousin, Jane Grey, instead of to his sister Mary. Mary was an out-and-out Catholic, and Cranmer, you know, wanted a thorough-going Protestant to rule over England. Lady Jane Grey did not wish to wear the crown, which she knew in her heart she had no right to. And when Edward died,

which happened soon afterwards, she wept bitterly and begged that she might remain as she was; but her husband and her father and her father-in-law were all ambitious of seeing her upon the throne and she was forced to obey them. For nine days she was Queen of England, and then, tra la, Mary comes riding into London, and as she was the rightful heir to the crown the people would have her to rule over them. 'T is to be hoped that they got enough of the bloody wretch before they were through with her."

"Is this the same Bloody Mary that you told me of before?" enquired Margaretta.

"The same one!" screamed Marjorie. "Does Your Majesty think there was a long line of Bloody Marys?"

"And what happened to Lady Jane?" asked the queen, meekly.

"Oh, what always happened to people in those days. She was sent to the Tower and afterwards beheaded. I saw her name cut in the wall of Beauchamp Tower (a part of the

great Tower of London, you know), where she was imprisoned. Upon my word, it made me cry."

"You are crying now," said the queen. "We won't play Lady Jane Grey."

"No, it 's 'most too warm to be beheaded to-day," Marjorie assented, wiping her eyes. "Then Mary, you know, put Archbishop Cranmer in prison for favoring Jane. She married Philip of Spain, the one who had promised to cherish the Holy Inquisition, and a hot time they made of it for the Protestants. Lots of us were burned at the stake in her day, and among the rest that same Archbishop Cranmer. They served a shabby trick on him, too, for he was made to believe that if he would sign a paper saying that the Catholic religion was the true one, he should n't be burned, and then after he had done it he found out that he had forsworn his faith for nothing, and that he was to die at the stake after all. If ever you burn any man at the stake, dear Margaretta, do let him have the comfort of being a glorious martyr."

"I will," promised Margaretta.

"But this Archbishop Cranmer died splendidly after all. When the fire was lighted he plunged the 'unworthy hand' that had signed the paper into the flames to be burned first, so the people could see what his real feeling was. It must have been a splendid scene."

"Yes, but it's even more heating to be burned at the stake than to be beheaded," cried the tender-hearted queen, whose taste for the tragic was by no means so great as her playfellow's. "Can't you think of some pleasant scene? Let's choose something funny this time."

"Well," said Marjorie, "we have already done all the funny things that I ever read about. There aren't many in history, anyhow. What with wars, persecutions, plots, and the scramble for thrones, people seemed to be always in trouble. There's a nice story, though, about Sir Walter Raleigh flinging his cloak over the mud for Queen Elizabeth to walk upon. That's not harrowing. You could be Eliza-

beth, you know, and I, Sir Walter; but, dear me, after awhile Elizabeth got jealous because he married somebody else, and had him sent to the Tower, and when James I came on, he chopped off his head."

"We might play just the first part," suggested the queen, but Marjorie would n't listen to that for a moment, and went on: —

"I remember a lovely story about the daughter of Sir Thomas More — "

"I suppose, if you like it, she had her head cut off in the end," Margaretta rather sarcastically remarked.

"No, she did n't," Marjorie was able to assert. "Her name was the same as ours — Margaret — and her father, like mine, though innocent of any crime, was thrown into prison."

This was certainly rather an unpropitious beginning. Marjorie's eyes filled with tears, and the queen, terribly troubled, threw her arms around her neck, crying: —

"Oh, do n't go on. I 'm sure this is the worst of all."

"His only offence was in denying that the king, Henry the Eighth, was the head of the church," Marjorie continued, while the queen went back to her place on the bank and watched her anxiously out of the corner of her eyes, wishing that something would occur to put an end to this uncomfortable tale. "On his way to execution, his daughter met him to take a last farewell. And — and —" Marjorie had begun to whimper again, "they cut off his head. It — it was stuck on a spike on London Bridge — and at — at night — she came down the river in a boat — and took it home in her arms."

Here she broke down altogether, covering her face and weeping audibly.

Margaretta was no less miserable. For a moment she watched her in silence, then kneeling down beside her upon the grass, gently pulled her hands from her face.

Immediately, Marjorie's attention was diverted by the sudden appearance of a strange and fantastic figure walking swiftly toward the palace.

With one accord, the queen and her playfellow hastened to rejoin the ladies on the terrace, before whom the gipsy soon came to a halt. She must have known that her presence in the court garden depended upon their caprice, but she stood her ground boldly.

She made a striking figure, for she was a tall, majestic woman, black-browed and deep-colored, with eyes that glowed like coals of fire. Her brows were bound with a crimson handkerchief, and gold coins dangled in her dusky locks, while her garb was composed of such bright colors as are beloved of the wild tribes.

"Will the honorable ladies have their fortunes told?" she said, but her glittering eyes were fixed upon the queen. "I have travelled far to be here before the sun goes down, for to-morrow will be St. Margaret's Day. I have come to warn you ere it be too late."

"Oh, yes, let us have our fortunes told," exclaimed the ladies-in-waiting, glad of some event to break the monotony of palace life,

and the Lady Wilhelmina held out her jewelled white hand, as the novelists say.

"I am no common fortune-teller," said the gipsy, addressing the countess, on whose proud face alone was any prohibition to be read. "I am the queen of my tribe and the gift of prophecy is mine."

So saying, she moved nearer to the queen.

"Will Your Majesty give me her hand? I can read better so."

Margaretta drew back shyly, for she was unused to intercourse with any save the ladies of her suite, but Marjorie's eagerness could not be restrained, and she whispered in the queen's ear: —

"Oh, let the gipsy tell your fortune. Just think, a real gipsy queen. We may never have such a chance again."

The Romany's sharp ears caught every word, and she smiled at Marjorie, showing all her brilliant white teeth.

"The little lady is right," she said.

"Very well. Tell hers first," commanded

the queen, pointing to Marjorie, "and then you may tell mine."

The countess, by leaning back in her chair, seemed to give consent. The other ladies gathered round the gipsy and the children, Madame slipping a gold piece into Marjorie's hand.

"Give it to her, *ma chère;* then she will promise you a magnificent future," she whispered.

A frown on the dark face of the fortune-teller proved that she had caught these words also. She deigned not so much as a look at the speaker, but turning Marjorie's hand palm upward, said calmly: "I have the map of your life, little lady, already in my head. All the gold in the palace could not change one line of it. Listen, darling!

"There are no storms gathering over your pretty head; but now and then a little cloud crosses your path with a shadow, to make the sunshine brighter beyond. You have the gay laugh and the brave heart which will carry you

through trouble, if trouble comes. Pleasure and wealth, and health and beauty I can promise you, and love enough even to satisfy a woman. Far and wide shall you travel over the earth, and scatter blessings wherever you go."

"But you have told me nothing about papa, nor when he will be free!" cried Marjorie, for at the last word the gipsy had dropped her hand and turned to the queen. "I want to know how soon I shall see him again. Tell me, good mother, when I shall be with papa."

"You should be satisfied, little lady. I have never promised any one a happier fortune."

She had now the queen's hand in hers, looking at it with such earnest attention that Marjorie wisely concluded it would be vain to bespeak her notice.

"At the birth of Your Gracious Majesty," she began, "I read your horoscope. Again in the stars, and now in these lines of destiny do I read of evils to come. Beware, beware of St. Margaret's Day, your day of birth. Your counsellors are blind, — blind, and know not how to

"'BEWARE ST. MARGARET'S DAY.'"

deliver you from your enemies. Woe to Avaril if the help of the humble is scorned. Had King Humboldt heeded the gipsy he would yet be upon the throne. The young queen, his child, is in danger. Beware — "

"Enough, enough!" interposed the countess, sharply. "Have a care, woman, how you speak of such matters. Go! We will have no more of your fortune-telling."

"Very good, very good, honorable lady," exclaimed the gipsy queen, with a triumphant laugh. "I have warned the court and I am satisfied. Heed my warning, else Duke Otto will sit on King Humboldt's throne."

She was gone before the countess could chide her for this last word.

As for the queen, she turned a troubled face to her ladies.

"What danger am I in? What does the gipsy mean?" she asked, anxiously, looking from one to another.

"Hers are but idle words," replied the countess. "Does Your Majesty suppose that it

would be given to a creature like that to see into futurity when a Barnstetter cannot?"

"And who did she mean was to help me?" continued Margaretta, still troubled, for the eagerness of the prophetess had much impressed her. There was no answer, but presently, feeling a tap upon her shoulder, the queen turned to encounter the significant glance of her young favorite.

"Cannot Your Majesty guess?" asked Marjorie, smiling, and pointing with her forefinger to her own person.

"The child is becoming intolerable," exclaimed the countess to Madame. "I think it is time that she should be removed from the royal palace."

CHAPTER XVI

MARJORIE heartily agreed with the countess as to the desirability of her own departure from the palace. Yet neither was Mr. Westbrook released nor had her Aunt Belinda arrived from Paris, the reason thereof being altogether beyond conjecture. Notwithstanding the warm affection that she had for Queen Margaretta, she was tired of the palace, and would fain return to humble life.

There is no reason to doubt that Marjorie was, as she ever afterwards averred, very uncomfortable in the royal household, where every one save Madame and her royal mistress looked upon her as an interloper.

The child of a man under arrest for treasonable designs against Margaretta, her presence there was most undesirable, and if Madame's secret should leak out, might cause trouble, so the countess was not so far wrong in her

desire that she should be removed at once. The little queen's health was wonderfully improved, and, in short, Marjorie had served her turn. So matters stood when the sun arose upon the morning of St. Margaret's Day.

It was the queen's birthday, but so much money had been spent at her coronation that it was to be celebrated in the simplest manner. In fact, Margaretta was far more concerned with the celebration of Marjorie's birthday than of her own, for the privilege had been granted to that unfortunate of visiting her father at the prison.

One can celebrate one's birthday in no more delightful manner than in conferring benefits upon those we love, and the queen had the satisfaction of feeling that this interview would not take place unless she had solicited it of Von Boum. As for the old minister, he had rejoiced that the tide of affairs had so changed that, for once, he could gratify a wish of his royal mistress.

Although she was not to start for the prison

until noonday, Marjorie was ready by nine o'clock.

The day, like the preceding, was warm and drowsy. The bees hummed among the lilies; the breeze sang faintly in the trees. Under the sunlight which fell in glittering showers upon it, the greensward turned to gold, and was dappled with flowers of vivid hue. The peaceful atmosphere of the palace and the dreamy loveliness of the garden served only to chafe poor Marjorie, quivering as she was with impatience for the moment to come when she could set out for the prison. It was like the sleeping palace in which one was doomed to silence and stillness for a hundred years, she thought, little suspecting what should transpire in it in the course of the next few hours.

The spell was broken in the early morning by the arrival of the prime minister, which was followed by the announcement that the queen was to leave Marll at once. Her Majesty was to be accompanied only by the countess, the other ladies to remain in the palace until the next day.

No reason was given for this haste, and if any one guessed, the secret was carefully kept in the guesser's mind.

"Alas, *ma mignonne*," cried Madame to Marjorie, "'t is not you nor me whose pleasure is consulted in this move. But take heart, my child, remembering the prophecy of the gipsy queen that the little clouds will melt away. By the time I am again with the queen, perhaps you and your papa will be reunited. I know, in fact, that —" but here Madame paused and would not continue the sentence, which seemed to promise so well. In a moment she added, "And when that time comes, you will hurry away to *le bon oncle Sam, n'est-ce pas?*"

"Yes, yes; we shall indeed, and we shall take precious good care to stay with him when once we have got there," Marjorie declared.

At this moment a messenger from the queen informed Marjorie that Her Majesty awaited her in the garden.

The moment had indeed arrived when they

must part, and the queen had chosen the spot where they had passed so many happy hours together for this sad ceremony.

"Your Majesty will soon forget her humble playfellow," said Marjorie, with the well-meant endeavor to lessen the pain of parting which she read in Margaretta's gentle face, but the queen answered: —

"No, I shall never forget you. It is far more likely that you, who will have so many playfellows, will forget me. Dearest, every St. Margaret's Day I shall keep your birthday in my heart. When the cannons are booming and the flags flying, I shall say to myself, 'T is the birthday of my Marjorie,' and I shall wish you happiness."

"I also shall keep your birthday," cried Marjorie. "On my birthday cake I shall have two sets of candles, one for you and one set for me, and I shall propose a toast, and it will be this: 'Here's to Margaretta, Queen of Avaril. May she be adored by all her subjects, and the happiest queen in Europe.'"

The color flew into Margaretta's face. She was greatly pleased, and such was the affectionateness of her nature that, no doubt, on many an anniversary of this day, amid the splendor of court festivals, she remembered the promise with a revival of tenderness for her childish playfellow.

The queen, leaning forward, now kissed Marjorie's cheek, and then with arms wound about each other they walked back to the terrace. There was no one there, as was usual at this hour, which the ladies of the household were wont to pass in the garden. The empty seats seemed to suggest that they should postpone speaking that last painful word and enjoy a few more moments together.

Hardly had they seated themselves in the two great chairs that were placed in the centre of the semicircle, when for the second time that morning the carriage of the prime minister drove up to the royal palace.

The duke, alighting, bowed low to the queen, soliciting the honor of an audience.

Then a most extraordinary thing happened.

On the very few occasions when Marjorie had found herself in the presence of the prime minister she had been ignored as completely as if she had no corporeal existence whatever, but now he brought his august eyes down to Marjorie's insignificant person and politely requested her to accompany Her Majesty into the palace.

CHAPTER XVII

MARJORIE could see that while they waited for the countess, for whom the prime minister sent immediately they entered the palace, that he was in an extremely agitated state of mind. His proud old face looked terribly careworn, and he paced the floor of the audience chamber with an impatience he could not control. Sometimes he stopped by a window and looked into the open, as if the smiling court garden were filled with enemies, or again he would turn his keen eyes upon his little sovereign with a softened glance that Marjorie thought became him. Something in his tone and look and manner whenever he addressed Margaretta expressed his conviction that it was by divine right that this little child commanded his reverence and his loyalty. If he performed the slightest service for her, such as to place a chair or pick up her fan or glove,

he did it with such an air of homage that, coming from so proud and stately a personage, impressed Marjorie with admiration and also the regret that she herself seemed to be so unworthy his notice.

Once he embarrassed her very much by suddenly turning upon her to say: —

"Well, mademoiselle, how do you find me?"

Whereupon she cast down her eyes, resolved to stare at him no more.

Presently she became aware that in turn his eyes were upon her, even as if he would fain know what manner of child she was. This silent inspection, though perhaps flattering, was extremely disconcerting, and for once in her life Marjorie welcomed the appearance of the countess.

The duke led her to the remotest corner of the long room, and for a moment they conferred together in low tones. The countess changed color, and uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"Oh dear! I believe something dreadful

has happened," whispered Marjorie to the queen, who nodded solemnly in reply.

The countess now came forward, and with unwonted condescension seated herself beside Marjorie.

"My dear child," she began in a tone absolutely that of affection, and which caused her whom she addressed to hop in her chair and look at her with what would be to any one but the stony old countess, disconcerting astonishment: "My dear child, an opportunity has presented itself whereby you can prove your gratitude to the queen for Her Majesty's unparalleled kindness to you."

"You had better come immediately to the point," interrupted the duke in a nervous way. "There is not a moment to be lost."

As the countess hesitated he himself took the word.

He stood by the queen's side, his hand laid very gently and reassuringly upon her shoulder, as she sat white and still, her great wide-flung eyes fixed upon Marjorie. The

countess too, leaning forward in her chair, looked with an eager eye at the child she had despised.

"It is feared," the prime minister exclaimed, "that an attempt may be made by the Ottoists to seize the queen on the journey she is to take to-day, which for reasons of state cannot be delayed. Any such scheme, however, will be defeated if you will take her place with the countess in the royal coach. Her Majesty can then be safely taken from the palace in the cab which leaves at the same hour to take you to see your father at the prison."

"Your resemblance to the queen would deceive *anybody*," the countess exultantly exclaimed, coolly ignoring her former denials of it.

"But what is to become of *me?*" cried Marjorie, with natural but, no doubt, exasperating anxiety for her own safety.

In her excited imagination she saw herself in the queen's coach drawn by foam-splashed

horses, with a furious attacking party in the rear, and she naturally felt that she had very much rather ride in the humble cab. Could it be that only yesterday she had absolutely craved such an opportunity for proving her bravery and devotion to the queen?

"I — I don't want to take the queen's place in the coach," she stammered. "I think it should be one of her own subjects. If it were *our* president it would be different, and I should feel that I ought to go."

"There is no danger for *you*," said the countess, with a contempt which was very unreasonable, considering the nature of the favor they asked and the age of her of whom they asked it. "If you should be captured you would be released directly the discovery is made that you are not the queen."

"Of course, of course," asserted the prime minister, crossing his arms over his breast and frowning down at her. "You would be released at once."

"I don't feel so sure about that." And now

for the first time Marjorie raised her face boldly to meet his eyes. "It seems to be a great deal easier to be captured than to get free again. Papa — "

The duke gave an exclamation of impatience. Indeed, he knew well that a delay might defeat his plan. He had long practice, however, in meeting emergencies, and Marjorie's last word gave him his cue.

"Will you go," he said, "if I give you an order for your father's release?" (The order had already been made out, for the government was now in possession of facts that proved Mr. Westbrook's innocence, but of course Marjorie did not know that.) "You must decide at once."

Marjorie's eyes travelled slowly from the resolute face of the old minister to the little queen, — that pathetic bit of royalty whose future was so uncertain, who now stood in such peril, who had bestowed upon her her friendship and favor, and for whom she really had such love and pity.

Marjorie was a brave child both by nature and training. She looked again at Von Boum. Her eyes were black as midnight, though her cheeks were white.

"For the queen and for papa! He shall not have a coward for a daughter," she said to herself. Then to Von Boum: —

"Yes, I will take the queen's place. I am not afraid." And being a Yankee she immediately added, "I will go if I carry the order with me in my pocket."

The order was made out on the instant.

"Will Your Majesty sign here?" said the duke, and Margaretta signed it.

As she laid down the pen, the queen silently turned, holding out her arms to Marjorie.

"Oh, Margaretta, Margaretta!" cried she, "the gipsy queen, I am sure, was right, and I am going to help you after all, for I will not be a coward."

But the little queen answered not a word. She stood looking at Marjorie with her soul in her eyes, and that air of patient acquies-

cence in the decrees of fate that made her so pathetic.

Marjorie was then hurried away. Although she was a Yankee she was a small one, and perhaps it is not to be wondered at if, in the excitement of the moment, she put the order in her pocket without reading it.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE cab which had been ordered for eleven o'clock was the first of the two vehicles to arrive. Peeping from one of the upper windows of the palace, Marjorie had a glimpse of Margaretta as she was hurried into this humble conveyance. The queen wore the motley suit that had been devised for and worn by her playfellow, and accompanying her was Madame, who was to have been Marjorie's companion to the prison.

"The queen, at least, will have pleasant company," she thought. "As for me, it makes me sick to think of riding miles with the countess."

The cab, which had been standing at a side entrance near the apartments of Madame, had hardly rattled away when the queen's carriage drew up.

So, escorted by the old minister, and fol-

lowed by the countess and the ladies of the royal household, Marjorie passed out of the palace for the last time.

She wore a suit of very fine light gray cloth, with a yoke of white silk daintily embroidered with silver thread, and a big black Gainesborough hat, a costume in which the queen had often been seen of late as she took her afternoon drive. It will hardly be necessary to say that every inch of her pliant young person was bent to the task of representing the queen. Nor would it be surprising if, despite certain disquieting fears, the moment was not without charm for her.

In truth, so well did Marjorie's face and Marjorie's manner suggest the face and manner of Margaretta that as he assisted her into the coach the old minister's glance rested upon her for an instant with decided approval, while a bystander cried: —

"God save the queen!"

Six hussars rode on either side of the coach, unsuspicious that the little person they

guarded was merely an humble American citizen.

The countess sat unusually erect. Her face was pale, but her sunken eyes burned in their sockets. Whatever her failings, she had loyalty and courage.

"Ha!" she said once, like the villain in a play, "those dastardly Ottoists are outwitted again."

To Marjorie she paid no attention whatever. Never again in those dulcet tones would she address her as "my dear child."

The journey was tiresome. The carriage curtains were drawn and Marjorie had but a fleeting glimpse, now and then, of the wild mountain scenery through which they passed.

At first she amused herself by playing the queen, and with such airs of royal dignity as the gentle Margaretta herself never assumed. If they excited the displeasure of the countess, she probably did not enjoy them the less for that.

"To think that I should be masquerading as

a royal person," she said to herself, "and that I should really be wearing a queen's clothes. Dear me, what will happen next? To have them taken off, I suppose. Countess," she said aloud, unable to be silent another moment, "what would happen if I should run away with the queen's clothes on?"

"You would immediately be brought back by the hussars," replied the countess, laconically.

"Well, I sha' n't get out of the coach till I 'm obliged to. I know a young man who paid half a sovereign just to get into a coach that Queen Victoria had once used,—but I do n't have to pay anything for my ride in this one. It's the first ride, too, that I 've had since I went to the palace."

"It will be long enough to make up," said the countess, grimly.

"Ah," cried Marjorie, thinking that here was a fine opportunity to gratify her curiosity. "Where are we going?"

"You ask a great many questions," remarked

the countess, haughtily, and then followed another silence.

Marjorie's heart sank with the belief that they were going to a certain castle which Margaretta had once described to her as a lonely spot in a gloomy mountain country. The return from such a place, in her position, it now struck her might be full of difficulty. With that order which the duke had given her in her pocket, she could but grudge every mile that carried her farther away from Marll.

The royal coach, however, went lumbering on, the road becoming gradually rougher, as the jolting and the jarring plainly proved. How many hours, she wondered, had Margaretta passed with this dull old countess in this coach, driving upon the boulevard at the capital, to be gazed at by her people? And this was but one of innumerable royal duties. Had she any lingering illusion concerning the felicity of wearing a crown, this drive with the countess would have dispelled it.

They had started at noonday, and now the

sun had set. It was stifling hot in the carriage, and the two travellers were inexpressibly weary. The countess, however, still sat erect, looking not unlike some fierce animal scenting danger. No doubt her nerves were terribly strained by Marjorie, who fidgetted with the window curtain, wriggled her feet, or drummed tunes with her fingers, utterly unable to keep still.

"Oh, do let me look out of the window," she begged. "If we are really going anywhere we must have nearly got there by this time; and it 's too dark now for the hussars to see me."

"Child, be quiet," commanded the countess. "Can you not emulate for this short time the patience and dignity of her whose place you have taken? But no, how could you? She is a descendant of a royal house, and you come of a race of shopkeepers."

"Yes, and I am feeling more shopkeepery every moment," Marjorie assented, with a truly pathetic delight in the sound of the human voice, even though it had no other message for

her than a snub. "I wonder," she went on, "if the queen and Madame are making such a dull time of it?"

The countess disdained to reply. The coach jogged on. For some time Marjorie remained quiet, with her head against the cushions, and the countess hoped that she had fallen asleep; but she was in far too excited a mood for that, and presently sat upright, saying impulsively: —

"If this goes on much longer I shall scream!"

Hardly were the words spoken when she did scream, having been thrown violently forward into the countess's lap by a sudden halt of the coach.

Instantly the countess's hand was over her mouth.

"Hush!" she whispered.

There was the sound of a scuffle outside, and the occupants of the coach, peeping cautiously out, discovered that they were surrounded by a band of armed horsemen, to whom the hussars had been forced to yield.

Almost immediately the door of the coach was forced open, and two men stood at the opening.

"The queen is not here," said the countess, with a laugh that showed her old teeth.

No rejoinder was vouchsafed, but a movement was made to reach the figure supposed to be that of Margaretta.

It is due to the countess to say that she made every effort to protect Marjorie, but the assertion that she was not the young queen was received with contempt. In a moment one of the horsemen had taken her from the coach and swung her across his saddle. Then, heedless of her cries, he set spurs to his horse and galloped away with her.

Night had fallen and it was a weird scene. The countess sat in the coach surrounded by the rueful guards, while the cavalcade with the kidnapped child went clattering down the narrow pass that was lost in the deepest shades of the mountains.

Though her captor paid no heed to Marjo-

rie's assertion that she was but a traveller from America and no queen, he was yet kind and respectful, making her as comfortable as he could, and assuring her that she would be treated well. After the first frantic moment, therefore, she was not much frightened, and perhaps thought herself well rid of the countess.

It was midnight when the kidnappers drew rein in the court-yard of a large, turreted castle, or so it appeared in the darkness. This court-yard was full of men, who broke into loud cheering at the sight of the small maid whom they thought the queen. They gathered so closely with their lanterns about her, peering with grim triumph into her face, that Marjorie shrank near her captor, whispering: —

"Oh, tell them that I am not the queen!"

"They will not believe me, you know," he answered her, with a laugh. "That great fellow with the yellow beard yonder, for instance, used to belong to the royal guards and knew the little queen's face as well as his own."

But he made the men stand back, all except one, whom he called De Groot, who, having listened to some directions in a language that was neither French, English nor German, took Marjorie from the horse and led her into the castle.

It was a very ancient and darksome dwelling, the like of which in all her travels had never before been seen by Marjorie. Small wonder if, for a moment, her courage failed her, for though, no doubt, on a sunshiny day, inspected with merry companions, this castle would seem a most interesting old building, entering at midnight a solitary captive, its atmosphere was depressing enough.

Reaching the banquet-hall, the sight of a table spread for supper somewhat lessened its gloom, for Marjorie had eaten nothing since a hurried luncheon just before leaving the palace. She was hungry enough to apply herself with a good relish to a substantial meal, but before she would seat herself (for her attendant, leading her directly to the table,

drew out a chair for her occupancy), she turned and looked at him from head to foot.

Alas, Marjorie's merry eyes already wore a captive's look, — that confused and anxious appeal with which even a little animal looks out to see what manner of man it is at whose mercy it suddenly finds itself, — a look that no man with any heart in him can see unmoved on a child's face.

With bulging eyes, loosely hanging double chin, a big stomach and tapering legs, and wearing a dark green livery with white waistcoat, he was ludicrously like a big frog, and she almost expected that he would give a loud c'chug and leap under the table. Though not agreeable to look at, his great face was not unkindly, and Marjorie took heart from it to explain her melancholy situation. Cheered by his respectful attention, she told her story to the end, when he bowed to the ground and motioned her to be seated at the table. Evidently he had not understood a word. Having repeated the tale with the same result in each

language she knew, — having expressed herself by gestures so clearly that any child would guess her meaning, — she concluded that the fellow was half witted or had received instructions to have no conversation with his prisoner. She looked at the poached eggs (smoking hot), at the roast chicken and delicious tarts, sighed, and at last sat down to the table, with the reflection that a queen's fare was none too good for her.

CHAPTER XIX

MARJORIE slept that night in a heavily-built, much-curtained bed, such as was used by the élite of past centuries, and the apartment in which it stood was so large that as she moved about in it she looked like a mere puppet. It was a bit lonesome to one accustomed to cosy quarters, and as she climbed into the great bed Marjorie told herself that she would feel more at home in a big drawer in the closet, if such modern arrangements were to be found in this ancient dwelling.

After the fatigue and excitement of a day that had seemed three days long, she slept soundly. On waking, she found herself refreshed and of good courage, and dressed with the determination to find some one at once, less stupid than De Groot, by whom she would be understood.

Eager for the day's chances, whatever they

might be, she opened the door and looked out upon a gallery hung with old tapestries. One end of this gallery was closed by a barred door, the other led into winding passages in which the adventurous Marjorie soon lost herself. What she wished was to find the banquet-hall in which she had supped the night before.

When, immediately after supper, she had been conducted to her room she was too sleepy to observe more than that she had mounted a narrow, winding, stone staircase, but no staircase was now to be seen and that she was not on the ground floor she assured herself at each window.

The search for some sign of human habitation in this bewildering old castle was beginning to appear uncanny, when her eager ears caught the sound of voices. They seemed to issue from a room at the end of the passage into which she had suddenly turned in the hope that it would take her back to the starting-point. The door was open, but a portière concealed her as for a moment she stood there summoning courage to enter.

"The game is now in our own hands" (such were the words Marjorie heard), "and the risk which each one of us has taken in your service binds you to —"

"You speak, Von Orfmann, as if I had exacted any such sacrifice of you," cried another voice, full of bitter discontent. "*Sacramento*, if it 's a question of obligation, the boot is on the other leg. 'T is your own scheme, gentlemen, not mine. I have told you a thousand times that I have no ambition to be King of Avaril, and if at your importunities I have sacrificed my own desire, it is surely enough without assuming a sense of gratitude. But your anxiety is needless. Now that you have Margaretta in custody, I shall keep my promise. The game, as you say, is in our hands."

Marjorie had listened to these words with her heart in her mouth, as the saying is, for she realized that these persons within this room were conspirators, and the man who spoke last, the black-hearted duke.

Reflecting that here was the chance she had

wished for, she pushed the portière aside and, as boldly as she could, cried out: —

"But you see, messieurs, the game is *not* in your hands, after all, for I am not the Queen of Avaril."

The men — there were four of them sitting around a table — jumped to their feet, and one of them, he that had last spoken, burst into a great laugh.

Marjorie ran up to him, crying: —

"Oh, how glad I am you are here! You will tell these others that I am not the queen."

"On my life, the little American, the child of glee!" exclaimed he whom we have known as the unsociable-man-in-the-corner. And he laughed again, even more heartily than before, either at the chagrin of his companions or his own satisfaction at their failure.

"Gentlemen," he said, "what she says is the lamentable fact. You have been outwitted. This little person that you have put yourself to the trouble of kidnapping is a humble traveller from — from —"

"From Biddeford," Marjorie hastened to say.

"Yes, gentlemen, a humble traveller from Biddeford."

"Biddeford! Biddeford?" repeated one of the conspirators, in a puzzled tone.

"Yes, — Biddeford, Maine," Marjorie explained.

"Maine is one of the United States of America," said the duke. "My friends, you are deplorably ignorant of geography, and mademoiselle, who knows everything, is shocked beyond measure. Come, place yourself here," he went on, turning to Marjorie and drawing a chair beside his own, "and tell me how, by all the marvels, you are here in the queen's place."

Not having had speech for hours with a single soul, except the old countess, our loquacious friend was not loath to obey. She, therefore, narrated her adventures with full particulars from the time she left the railway carriage in Marll to the present moment, no doubt setting them forth with convincing

reality by the aid of a ready tongue and all the arts of pantomime.

Duke Otto and his companions listened with attention, for these experiences she spoke of had led to the discomfiture of their own carefully made plans, and some hint might be gathered from them by which they could choose their future course.

"And when you, mademoiselle, left the palace in the royal coach," said he whom they called Von Orfmann, "in what direction was the queen to go?"

"The countess took good care that I should not know that," Marjorie replied, seeing a wisdom in the uncommunicativeness at which she had formerly so chafed.

"Leave her alone; the little American sticks to her friends," cried the duke, forestalling a second question.

When Marjorie told him of the order for her father's release that she had bought of the prime minister, Duke Otto said, grimly: —

"He deceived you, little mademoiselle,

for your father was already cleared of any suspicion of favoring our party. Did I not work day and night to bring that about?"

"You? That was kind," exclaimed Marjorie.

The young man laughed, shaking his head.

"You are a very sharp Yankee, mademoiselle. Yet I believe, after all, that you never suspected that the man-in-the-corner was the cause of the trouble that befell you on your arrival at Marll. No? I thought not. And why did I let suspicion fall upon your good papa? Why, simply because it was a question of whether he or I should fall into the hands of the government when the train should arrive at the capital. I leave it to your sagacity if it were not better that it should be he?"

"Certainly not," cried Marjorie, "and he perfectly innocent."

"For that very reason," said the young man, coolly, "since he could be cleared of the charge and I could not. Truly, it took longer than I

had any idea of, but I assure you not because I did not make every effort."

"May I ask," interrupted one of the gentlemen, who had several times during this dialogue laid his hand upon Duke Otto's arm; "may I ask what may be the object of taking this child into your confidence?"

Again Duke Otto laughed.

"But you are a most amusing gentleman," he said. "Do you really always have an *object* in whatever you do? Come, Miss Marjorie Westbrook, let us take a walk in the old garden while your breakfast and my luncheon are being prepared."

Marjorie followed his eyes to a clock in a corner. It was twelve o'clock.

They went out together, the young man looking back at his friends to say: —

"Gentlemen, I will be at your service this afternoon."

CHAPTER XX

THE spot designated by Duke Otto as the garden was a rectangular space, with winding alleys, enclosed by a high wall, against which rose trees had been trained, but the enclosure was overgrown with weeds and thistles.

In the centre of it was an unsightly, slimy pond, with a bench here and there around it, and on one of these the duke and Marjorie seated themselves.

"You do not like it, little mademoiselle," he said, laughing, as he saw her look of dismay. "Well, neither do I; but as an unsuccessful claimant to a throne, I have neither time nor money for the gentle pursuit of gardening."

Marjorie gave him one of her eager glances.

"Why," she enquired, pointing to the neglected garden, "why do you not leave off being

a claimant to the throne, and attend to it? It looks what people in Biddeford call extremely shiftless."

"Your remark is very personal," answered Duke Otto, good-humoredly. "Let's change the subject. You have seen a good deal of palace life, it seems, since we formerly met, and have had numerous adventures. I suppose it seems harder than ever to go to one's home in Biddeford and struggle for, — how does it say itself, — for an average of ninety-nine?"

"Not at all," answered Marjorie. "I would rather be in Biddeford with papa than upon the grandest throne in Europe."

Her eyes suddenly filled with tears, for the difficulties in rejoining her father, notwithstanding his release, seemed as great as ever. In truth, since their separation, she had not been so much discouraged as she was at this moment.

"Oh, where is papa now?" she cried out in sudden distress, "and *when* shall I ever see him again?"

She was obliged to examine an unsightly burdock to conceal her face, over which the tears were plenteously rolling.

"Dear child, it shall all be arranged. Do not be afraid. Above all, do not cry, dear little mademoiselle. I cannot endure to see a child cry."

"But you can endure to give her a good reason to cry," said Marjorie, tartly.

"I am not a very successful person, truly," the duke went on, catching her hand and pulling her back to the bench, "but I can undoubtedly arrange this. I shall communicate with your father at once in regard to your meeting him."

Marjorie hereupon wiped her tears, but presently turned, gave him an attentive look, and sighed. He knew what the sigh meant.

"You do not trust me, and, after all, I cannot blame you for that. Yet, you are altogether wrong. On my honor, I thought, in doing what I did to avoid falling into the hands of the government at Marll, that I

should cause your father but a slight annoyance. And truly, I did have trouble and danger enough to set him free."

"But," said Marjorie, doubtfully, "you have conspired against the queen. Oh, monsieur," she went on, eagerly, "why do you try to usurp Margaretta's throne? It 's rightfully hers, and strange as it seems, she wishes to keep it. She means to rule well, too, and I am sure you do not love the people of Avaril as she does."

"*Sacramento!*" exclaimed the duke, laughing. "You are quite right. I think the people of Avaril are an intolerable nuisance."

Nor could she induce him to speak on this subject with any more seriousness, and so was forced to give it up in despair.

Despite the reason he had given her to do so, she could not dislike this young nobleman. Looking into his frank, kindly face and listening to his genial voice it was difficult to believe him the black-hearted villain he was considered to be by the people of Avaril.

She was pondering these things when a sudden commotion arose in the court-yard.

Duke Otto had his own reasons for remaining in the garden, so well hidden as he was from whomsoever these persons might be. But Marjorie, hoping for she knew not what, flew to the opening. There for half a moment she stopped, flinging up her hands and crying in no feigned astonishment: —

"Mercy on us, — my Aunt Belinda!"

And Aunt Belinda it was, no more than the sun to be kept from her elected course, though it led over the dizziest mountain crags, through armed bands, or into the most inaccessible of castle court-yards. There she stood, sweet and serene as ever, disarming with her airs and graces the inhospitable De Groot. If, like the duke, the reader has hitherto imagined that Marjorie's aunt was old and ugly, he has only himself to blame, for the present writer has said nothing of the kind, and this young American girl was beautiful as the morning.

While she and De Groot were trying to come to some understanding of each other's purposes and desires, an older woman alighted

from the carriage, — a grim New England duenna, who looked about her with an air that seemed to say that if she chose she could blow down the stone castle of Cohentz with her breath.

"Well, if it is n't Mis' Pond!" exclaimed Marjorie, upon whom the sight of these two dear, familiar faces had a most inspiriting effect. Thereupon she made a wild dash for the two travellers, and had just emerged from their fervent embraces when Duke Otto reached the opening.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he cried, "'t is *she*, — my lady of Biddeford!"

And now let any artist who attempts to depict this young man, as he steps forward with beaming hospitality and delight, be careful to represent him as the most gracious image of a gallant gentleman, for so in reality he looked.

He welcomed the two ladies as if each were a princess of the royal blood, and led them into his old castle as if it had been built merely for their accommodation.

In a few moments after their arrival, the banquet-table in the great hall was spread and such a luncheon served as De Groot, that able major-domo, had no need to blush for. Yet, notwithstanding this warm welcome, the little party placed themselves around the board in no merry humor.

It was natural that Miss Belinda should bear no extra good-will to this gentleman, whose pretensions to the throne of Avaril had borne so hard upon her own family. In truth, her manner was frosty, and the duke and Marjorie had the conversation pretty much to themselves.

But this could not last long in such an atmosphere of pure sunshine as this amiable young man shed around. In spite of herself, Miss Belinda melted a little, as did her excellent duenna also. They bethought them of reports they had heard of the disinclination of Duke Otto to be made king, and how it was said that the conspiracy had been hatched by certain noblemen of Cohentz, who were averse

to the long regency necessary under a child-queen. As to his offence against themselves, that was quite another affair, but they were forced to believe that he had done all he could to repair it.

"Ah, yes, mademoiselle," he said, earnestly, looking at Miss Belinda, "by this time the government has proof of the innocence of monsieur, your brother, and he is free. I know this to be true, and, also, I must say to you that it was only by main force that I was hindered from delivering myself to the authorities in order to put an end to the wrong he suffered."

"Yes, I see how it was," murmured Marjorie; "those three men upstairs that will have you king whether or no, they would not let you go."

The duke smiled, but continued without otherwise noticing her remark:—

"I assure you that, whatever the consequences to myself, had I dreamed of the trouble I was bringing upon Mr. Westbrook, I

would have made no effort to save myself at his cost. You cannot forgive me, but do you believe what I say is true?"

Those he addressed for a half-second looked at one another, then answered with one accord: —

"I do."

They were impulsive feminine creatures, you see, who trusted to their own instincts, which assured them that this young man was not the monster he had been made to appear.

"As to forgiveness," added Miss Belinda, with much sweetness and dignity, "that is a question for my brother to decide, but he is generous and noble."

The duke smiled at her cleverness in neither giving nor refusing him a too hasty pardon, perhaps consoling himself with the thought that it was not altogether beyond his reach.

The feeling of constraint with which they had seated themselves at the table passed away. The duke made himself as agreeable as he could, which was very agreeable indeed.

The two ladies related their experiences since their search for Marjorie began. They told of the journeys they had made, what obstacles they had overcome, how locked doors opened for them, and "No" had often changed to "Yes," even the churliest individual, on learning their errand, seeming eager to help them. While in Marll they had been guests of the American consul, and the government had furnished the means of their safe conveyance to the castle in Cohentz, where it was thought the kidnapped child might be found.

At this point the duke shrugged his shoulders, declaring that, under the circumstances, it was no more than mademoiselle had a right to demand. "The government is under obligations to your family for the present safety of the queen," he cried, bowing to Marjorie.

"This obligation was recognized by the prime minister in an interview I had with him," said Miss Belinda.

"The great Boom Boom under an obliga-

tion to *me?*" Fancy that!" exclaimed Marjorie. "Did he look over the top of your head when he mentioned it?"

"Ah, little one, you who know the world so well not to have discovered yet that even aged prime ministers do not lose the opportunity to look at beautiful young ladies!" cried the duke.

"The prime minister's favor was already bespoken by my niece," Aunt Belinda answered. "He was pleased to express himself enchanted with her courage and the spirit with which she played the queen. He told me that he had but the smallest expectation that a child like her would ever have the courage to do what he asked of her."

"I should n't have done it if it had n't been for that order for papa's release he promised me. I think we have been cheated all round," said Marjorie, with a toss of her head.

At this moment a servant brought a message to the duke, who, excusing himself, gave our party of Americans an opportunity to converse in private.

CHAPTER XXI

NOTWITHSTANDING her impatience, Marjorie was forced by her aunt to give a circumstantial account of all that had befallen her since her arrival in Marll. This done, her own turn came.

Before starting on this journey to Cohentz, it seems that her aunt had communicated with Mr. Westbrook, who was then under custody, not obtaining his release until a few hours after their departure. Mr. Westbrook was in utter ignorance of what had befallen his daughter until told by Belinda, who perceived that, however disquieting to him in his position, he should be in possession of certain facts before her own plans could be made.

No doubt Marjorie's fond parent greatly chafed at his enforced inaction in this matter and the consequent setting forth of the two

ladies without masculine escort, but Belinda was not to be stayed, and in truth there seemed much necessity for haste. So at last she fared forth, with his sanction and a good courage, on her rough journey. If her search was successful she was to send him a despatch to that effect, and carry Marjorie to Paris, where he would join them the instant he should be permitted to leave Marll.

"But why was it that you did not get the telegram that papa sent immediately after we reached Marll?" Marjorie enquired.

"Because just after you left Paris I received an invitation to visit two young ladies whom I fell in with at Oxford," Aunt Belinda explained. "They were daughters of a very grand nobleman, and the invitation was for a week at their country seat, — quite too good to be refused."

"But I thought you did n't like the aristocracy," Marjorie persisted, much puzzled.

"One does not travel, if one has any sense, with a bandage over one's eyes," replied her

aunt. "I wish to see all classes of society, and not be told afterwards when I make an assertion of any one of them that I have had no opportunity of judging."

"I reckon your auntie has changed some of her ideas," interposed Mis' Pond, with the air of one who has a grievance. "The folks over here have been real polite to her, I allow, but a young and —" The speaker paused for a moment to regard the exquisite loveliness of Belinda, but either she had no eye for beauty or flattery was against her principles, for all she said was: "A young and *real hearty looking* girl like her can't judge as can a plain, middle-aged woman, and the question is, how do those same folks treat *me?*"

Here she paused again as if to give Belinda an opportunity to reply, but as no reply was forthcoming she closed her remarks with an expressive "humph!"

On rejoining his guests, the duke informed them that the message which Belinda had given him for Mr. Westbrook had been sent,

and all arrangements made for the continuation of their journey, which the ladies desired should be as soon as possible. The road beyond the castle toward the frontier town where they were to take the train for Paris was exceedingly rough, and as the horses were pretty well worn out he advised them not to set forth until nightfall.

To relieve the weariness of waiting he offered to show them over the castle, which, having been restored from the outer stockade to the summit of the watch-tower, was well worth seeing. It differed in only a few features from those impregnable fortresses from which the barons of the middle ages defied even the king himself. The frowning walls of masonry were broken by more windows than could have been allowed in those days, when the first necessity of a dwelling was a means of defence. Some of the apartments were furnished with modern comforts, and portraits of Duke Otto's line hung along the walls of a long corridor which answered well

enough to the modern picture gallery. These ancestors of Duke Otto, whether courtier, man-at-arms, dame or damosel, wore the noble air that was noticeable in his own person. This loftiness stamped upon so many faces was very impressive, and even Marjorie, although in a child's vague way, perceived that this race had played its part in the world with purpose, courage and magnanimity. Moreover, these virtues were in most imposing attire, in pearl-bedecked doublets and scarlet cloaks, in velvet-embroidered mantles and puffs of lace, and ornamented with jewels galore.

Before two of these old portraits they stopped as if by the detaining hand of one long dead and gone, eager to reconnect himself for a moment with his kind.

The first was that of a man in the flower of youth and beauty, who held your glance by the pride and happiness of his own.

"Life was a holiday in his time, a splendid show, for the feudal period had just come to a close," Duke Otto explained as three pairs of

questioning eyes were raised to his, "and the taste for pleasure and art brought the nobles from their gloomy old castles to the court. Certain old songs written by this Roderick of Cohentz and sung to this day by his countrymen prove him to have been a poet as well as a courtier. One easily believes, too, that the firm hand that toys with the hilt of his sword would not be loath, if need be, to plunge it into any miscreant, though doubtless he had graved upon its blade the Christian virtues of mercy to the weak and defence of the helpless."

"Poet, courtier and soldier, all in one," cried Marjorie with animation. "Oh, if I were a man, that is the kind I would be."

"In our time if a man succeeds in being either one he is well pleased with himself. There are no such men now as this jewel of the court, this soldier-poet," cried Belinda, walking on with a toss of her pretty head.

The young duke followed, crying, "Ah, mademoiselle, he was one thing more; he was

a brave and ardent lover," to which she answered still more scornfully.

"A *lover!* What of that? Lovers are to be seen *any* day."

Whereupon, wishing the duke to know that in this particular, at least, her own family was not behind his, Marjorie added: —

"Lovers? I should say so; even in America. Why, Aunt Belinda herself has had plen — "

"Not such lovers as this Roderick of Cohentz, I assure you," declared the duke, anticipating the end of Marjorie's sentence, which had been stopped in the middle at the bidding of Miss Belinda's frown. "He it was who, having received his death-wound on his lady's errand, caused himself to be strapped to his horse and rode alone in his agony over these mountains to keep his tryst with her."

The two walked on, leaving Marjorie and Mis' Pond still looking at the ardent Roderick.

"Dear me," sighed Marjorie, "'t is a fine thing to have a lot of grand ancestors like the duke's, and of each portrait an interesting story

to tell. I wish we Westbrooks had a family portrait gallery, but, oh dear! oh dear! what a funny lot they would be. First, there would be Thomas Westbrook, whose portrait hangs in the town-hall at Biddeford. I have been told that he was a very good and honorable man, but he does not look as if he ever rode bleeding over the mountains to keep tryst with a lady. His son Thomas was papa's grandfather, and I have heard him say that, when he was a boy at school in Bangor, his grandfather used to come down once every month to see him and mortified him dreadfully. He always wore a white beaver hat and a long brown surtout, and carried a turkey by the legs as a present to the schoolmaster. Of course we would have a full-length picture of *him*, and — Why, Mis' Pond, what 's the matter? Your eyes are snapping dreadfully."

In truth, the aspect of this excellent lady had, during Marjorie's chatter, undergone a strange change, which, no doubt, was the expression of her disapproval of these remarks.

"You have no call to despise your own folks, Marjorie Westbrook," she said, sternly. "Not one of those decked-up ancestors of the duke was any more respected than old Thomas Westbrook, your great-grandfather, who was the first of his name to settle in Biddeford. He came from Bangor an' took up a tract of wild land, just outside what is now the town. He had jest made a little clearin' an' got a roof over the heads of his wife and children when the Revolutionary War broke out, and off he goes to fight for his country. He was a *patriot* an' his wife was a patriot, too, for all the time he was gone she kept the family together. She baked an' brewed, an' made their clothes, made homespun for the soldiers, too, and then at night she would go out upon the clearin' *an' burn brush!* Do you suppose any of these bedizened females ever did that?"

"No," answered Marjorie, her eyes upon a regal dame in a robe of red velvet and a little jewelled coronet upon her head. "No, I do n't suppose they did."

"The Westbrooks did n't have any title or any duchy, but they have always been in good orthodox standin', an' folks showed their trust in 'em by appointin' 'em to public offices. They served as selectmen or town clerk, or moderator, or overseers of the poor," Mis' Pond went on, determined that Marjorie should appreciate the heights to which her family had climbed, "an' they thought a sight of education. Old Deacon Jonathan Westbrook, your father's grandfather, that you have been sneerin' at, gave the Lyceum to the town. He took a prominent part in all leadin' questions himself, and exerted himself considerable to get the State Liquor Law passed an' effect other reforms. Both his sons, Amos and James, were sent to college an'—"

"Amos is grandpa; I know about *him*," said Marjorie. "What did James do?"

"He was a real promisin' young man, but he died."

"Oh, well, they do that in the most aristocratic families," said Marjorie, laughing.

While Mis' Pond had been thus discoursing, the duke and Miss Belinda had gone on to the extreme end of the gallery. Taking a sweeping glance of the noble company, the young American girl drew a deep sigh.

"Such a gallery of family portraits," she said at last, turning her clear young eyes upon her companion, "must be a great incentive to noble conduct. Here, I should fancy you could easily invigorate your courage and cultivate the sentiment of honor and personal dignity." She sighed again, perhaps this time with the same regret which Marjorie had expressed. Yet the conduct of the representative of her own race, her brother, certainly seemed far more honorable than that of the young man of this noble house.

Perhaps the duke guessed her thought, for suddenly he said: —

"Dear mademoiselle, try not to judge me so harshly. Perhaps these ancestors of mine have influenced me otherwise than you think. All these dead men have, in their day, been

ready to sacrifice themselves for the good of Cohentz, and the policy of Avaril under the regency is thought by our people to be opposed to the interest of the duchy. You think, no doubt, that from personal ambition I seek to usurp Margaretta's throne. Little do you guess the pressure brought to bear upon a man situated as I am, the sole hope of a patriotic party. Neither am I myself devoid of loyalty. I love Cohentz, and her welfare is so dear to me that I would sacrifice in her interest my own wishes. Yet I am often restrained by the knowledge that I have not the abilities by which alone a man can rule a great nation. No, mademoiselle; on the contrary, I was born with a passionate love of adventure,—of a free life. So you see my duty in the matter is not so simple after all."

He spoke so sadly and with such candor that all that remained of Belinda's resentment melted away, never to return, and she gave him her hand in token thereof. He had just

raised the slim fingers to his lips when Marjorie came forward with a desire for information concerning one of the portraits.

"I do believe this man was a Crusader, for he wears a great cross on the breast," she said, excitedly, "and he has the nicest face, I think, of them all."

"You have divined the truth. He was a Crusader, and the founder of our house. Yes, yes, be not so impatient, my child. I will tell you about him at once.

"When Pope Gregory VIII called upon all Christian princes to leave off fighting each other, and to go on a crusade to recover the Holy Sepulchre from the Mohammedans, Ferdinand I sat on the throne of Avaril. You are a famous historian, little mademoiselle; do you remember the part Avaril played in the crusades?"

Marjorie did not reply with her usual readiness. She wished that she had not been left in such mortifying ignorance of the history of this country, but the truth is, she could remem-

ber nothing at all about it. At last she said, adroitly: —

"I suppose Ferdinand was one of those princes that Richard I of England, called Lion-Heart, quarrelled with. I remember that, one by one, they went back to their own homes, leaving the army so weak that, though Lion-Heart got within sight of the Holy City, he was n't able to capture it. I remember reading that he climbed up to the top of the Mount of Olives, where he was told he would have a fine view of Palestine; but when he could have looked upon it, he covered his face with his mantle, saying, "They who are not worthy to win it are not worthy to behold it." Lion-Heart was a brave knight, but a bad, bad son; he broke his father's heart."

"That was John," interrupted Aunt Belinda. But Marjorie, thinking, no doubt, to hide her ignorance of one country by her knowledge of another, kept on, unheeding the correction: —

"Their father was Henry II, the first Plan-

taganet. A poor old king he was, obliged to keep his queen shut up to prevent her conspiring with her sons against him. The eldest son was leading an army against him when he was taken ill, and, believing that he would die, he sent a message to the king, begging him to come to him and forgive him. But, oh dear, oh dear! so treacherous the young man had shown himself, that the king thought very likely this was a trick to make him prisoner, so he only sent his ring and his pardon; and the young prince died kissing the ring, longing in vain to see his father's face once more. Then Richard, the second son, with the aid of the French king, made war upon him, — poor old man! And he was worn out now with all his wars and trouble, — with his bad wife and his disobedient sons, — and had no heart to fight any more. So he said he would make such terms as they liked, and promised to pardon Richard and the friends he had got to help him. But when the list of these was brought to the king, and he saw on it the name of John,

his best-loved son, who had never before rebelled against him, — then, his heart being broken, he died. He compared himself to an old eagle torn to pieces by his eaglets. Richard was said to grieve bitterly at his father's death, and when he saw his body in the church he cried out, 'Alas! it was I who killed him!' He didn't know any better, you see, Aunt Belinda not being there to tell him. And then he went crusading, but he didn't have any luck, which served him right. He did not live very long after he got back to England again, and before he died he expressed the wish that his body should be laid at the feet of his father in Fontevrand Abbey, in token of his penitence. And now the stone figures of his father and mother and himself all lie on one monument as sociable as you please, so that one might think they had been a beautiful, harmonious family."

"Well, mercy on us! are you going on in this way forever?" asked Mis' Pond, as Marjorie stopped for a moment to take breath. "I thought you couldn't wait a minute to hear

about this young fellow that the duke was to tell us about."

"I can't. I can't wait a *minute*," cried Marjorie, whose mind now came back with a bound to the portrait.

CHAPTER XXII

"IN the time of King Ferdinand," began the duke, smiling at his eager young listener, "there was a certain young man called, I know not why, Otto the Lucky."

"Perhaps because he was so handsome," Marjorie suggested, looking at the portrait. "It *is* lucky to be handsome."

"Perhaps because he was resolute to do what he had set his mind on, for that he was so no one can doubt who looks at his spirited young face. A determined person is always what the foolish call lucky," added Miss Belinda, who being so resolute herself certainly ought to know.

"He was not a knight at first, but a minstrel without any settled purpose, as it seems, beyond that of enjoying himself. He led a roving kind of life, wandering from place to place, sure everywhere of a welcome. Imagine him,

then, as he approaches some huge feudal dwelling, some castle like this, his hair flowing free under a little cap, and his alert young body clad in tights and doublet, with a mantle over his shoulders perhaps, if the weather is cold, and his harp in his hand.

"Ladies," said Duke Otto, here interrupting himself, "as I can furnish you no better entertainment, suppose we descend to the barbican, and, as I tell the story, proceed again over the castle, reconstructing the picturesque feudal time, which too often seems to us but some enchanting, yet confused dream."

He looked at Belinda, who gave assent, and the whole party, leaving the gallery, followed him down the twisting tower staircases to the open and thence to the barbican, a small outer fort, which in case of attack must be won before the moat that surrounded the castle could be reached.

"Our minstrel, however, was sure of a warm welcome," said the duke. "No iron grating barred him out. The gate-watch begged his

company ere he went his way to the fireside in the donjon-keep, where the baron would be sitting with his pet hawk, hooded and belled, on his fist, his hounds lying at his feet, where he would find the priest bending over his lectern, the little heir with his books on a stool at his side, and the lady of the castle with her bower-maidens at work upon their tapestries. All these will listen spellbound to the sweet singer, but first he must stop to amuse the gate-watch, and to listen to the castle news: how my lord had returned that year from the Holy Land, grievously wounded, and swore by the rood to go no more to the wars, yet, ere they had healed, he was fighting again with the barons against the king; how a good and true knight had been shot by accident the day previous at the chase, and when the gay caval-cade of lord, ladies and children with hawk and hound that had galloped pell mell that morning over the drawbridge returned at night they brought back his dea' body with the game. And they told h.w the young heir,

the lord's eldest born, was to be knighted on the morrow, and the minstrel promised himself that he would stay to witness the ceremonies. So, having rested himself, Otto the Lucky started for the donjon-keep."

With these words the duke led his guests over the drawbridge. It was wide enough for a squadron to pass over, and light enough to be raised by a single man, as the duke illustrated.

"At the first approach of danger," he explained, "the drawbridge was drawn up and the portcullis let down, so that the attacking party found a water-filled moat, on the further side of which rose a ponderous stone wall with but one opening, covered by an iron grating. If they forced it there was another wall to be taken before they reached the flanking towers with donjon-keep, in which were the apartments of the lord and his family. The keeps were sometimes provisioned for a year and had a spring of fresh water inside the walls, being thereby enabled to withstand a long siege. A

narrow, walled walk led from tower to tower, the battlements being pierced by loop-holes behind which archers could be stationed. Such a castle in a siege must have been a lively place indeed, its solid walls shaken by the force of the enemy's battering-rams, its battlements cracked and falling under volleys of mangonel stones, while fire-arrows and boiling oil and stones were spat out of its innumerable mouths upon the besiegers. Men-at-arms in clanking armor swarmed through the winding passages, the walls echoed the orders of captains, and the ropes creaked with the weight of baskets of missiles drawn up to the top of the towers.

"But even in feudal days men could not always be fighting, and now from the watch-tower a horn was blown and a procession went forth to the hunt, or the women and children descended the tower staircase to meet a returning raiding party, or to welcome some lordly visitor who, with his retinue, is just within the gates."

What a fine place would the castle be for a game of hide-and-seek, Marjorie thought; but its maze of passages, its bottomless staircases and blind alleys had been designed for the discomfiture of enemies, and without a guide a stranger might be hopelessly lost in it.

Passing up the tower staircase, our friends at last reached the donjon-keep.

"Here," said the duke, when they had inspected this great apartment and seated themselves on the benches and stools which were placed about the great fireplace; "here was the minstrel received with the heartiest welcome, placed by the fire and refreshed with meat and wine. The baron and his knights, my lady with her children and bower-maidens, gathered around him. Not a pair of lovers tarried behind the arras or tapestries that hung over the embrasured windows, where they were wont to hide themselves. Last of all came Godfrey, the heir, with Rosabel, the fairest damsel, thought Otto the Lucky, that he had ever seen. The sight of her golden head, so

shapely and sweet, with its close fillet and long, yellow braids, so near the ugly shock-head of Godfrey, drove him mad. No doubt, little mademoiselle," the duke interrupted himself to say, "you understand that this is but the modern way of saying that he fell in love with Rosabel on the spot. Though but an humble minstrel, did he despair? I assure you to the contrary, little mademoiselle. It is not the way of my race. He applied himself to the task of winning Rosabel's favor, and as he sang his voice struck on her heart like a battering-ram on the castle masonry."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" cried Marjorie, turning to Mis' Pond, who sat nearest her, "why do n't *we* live in a castle with a donjon-keep and portcullises and things? And why do n't *we* have minstrels fall in love with us all in a minute and sing to us like a battering-ram?"

"A mediæval castle, my child, must have been a most uncomfortable dwelling," replied the duke, caressing his moustache to hide a smile, at the idea of the prosaic Mis' Pond

in the rôle of a heroine of romance. "Imagine yourself here in the bitter weather of winter. With a whole tree in the fireplace this apartment would not be warm. The chill of these stone walls would make itself felt, I assure you. The tiled floors, though covered with rushes, the skins of wild beasts, perhaps, here and there, and after the wars with the Mohammedans, a few Saracenic and Persian rugs, would freeze the feet. The tapestries hanging over the doors did not keep out the draughts. Look behind you, mademoiselle, and you will perceive how the arras by the great door yonder are, even on this soft midsummer day, blown to and fro by currents of air."

Once more the little party looked about the spacious apartment, bedchamber, sitting-room, dining-room and oratory all in one. The immense bed on a dais at one end, reaching with its huge posts nearly to the ceiling of the lofty chamber, was a room of itself, leaving a great nearly empty space, surrounded by tapestried

walls, along which were ranged clothes-presses and great carved dower-chests, serving as seats.

There was a dresser with shelves for furnishings for the banquet-table, — flagons and beakers and plates of gold, and against the dull colors of the tapestry gleamed an ivory image of the Virgin, before which was a silver lamp, which nine or ten centuries earlier would have been kept burning there.

"And these old chests and benches are the ancestors of our bureaus, sofas and chairs," said Belinda, in a musing tone, "and they in turn from still earlier and less comfortable forms. The men who wore those heavy suits of armor or harnesses of chain-mail that I saw in the great hall below had much to do in the world besides making war and the tourney. And more thinking went on under those iron head-pieces than we of our day perhaps imagine. For whereas we walk thoughtlessly along a beaten track, they were obliged to take each step with deliberation. His clumsy armor serves no

other purpose now than for decoration or as curios, but his code of honor is still that of every true gentleman. Let us hear, if you please, how your ancestor proceeded with his wooing."

"The next morning when all the castle-folk assembled in the court-yard to witness the ceremony of knighting, Otto was among them. With jealous eyes, no doubt, he watched Godfrey take from the hands of an old warrior his shield and helmet, saw him kneel to receive the blow upon the shoulder by which the honor of knighthood was conferred, and arise Sir Knight, pledged by his oath to 'right poor ladies' harms.'

"On the field, however, whither they next betook themselves for the last act of the ceremony, where the new-made knights put their horses through their paces and then rode at the quintain —"

"And what may that be?" interrupted Marjorie.

"A wooden manikin, my child, at which

the knights tilted. It was the crucial test, into which each youth flung himself with all his might. On the field where the newly made knights were exercised, Sir Godfrey acquitted himself with less than his usual skill. Perhaps the sight of his lady so gracious to the poor minstrel unnerved him; at all events, when the great moment came and he struck with his lance at the quintain, 't was so unskilfully done that he received the blow in the back from the bag of sand that was arranged to sling from the crossbar upon the awkward tilter.

"In the shout that followed, none laughed louder than Otto, insomuch that the old baron, father of Sir Godfrey, stung by the disgrace of his son, cried out:—

"'Let the minstrel himself have a lance and better the stroke, if he can.'

"Being furnished with the necessary equipments, nothing loath, Otto the Lucky leaped upon a horse, and as he reached the quintain leaned forward in his saddle and hit the tar-

get straight in the middle, by which unpractised feat he was made a knight forthwith."

"Were not the proceedings somewhat irregular?" asked Miss Belinda. "I thought the candidate for knighthood spent the previous night in a vigil over his arms."

"Oh, surely not always. Many received the honor off-hand," answered Duke Otto, but with a sly smile that convinced Belinda that he added a touch now and then to his tale to please his romantic listener.

"Raised to the rank of a knight, Sir Otto, as his title was, aspired to the hand of Rosabel, but she flouted Otto as she had flouted Godfrey. Most likely she was an ambitious young woman and desired a man of fame for a husband, for both of her suitors went to the war.

"Now the first and the second crusade were holy wars, directed against the infidel for the rescue of lands which might be considered the rightful heritage of Christendom, but I regret to be forced to remind you that this third war, of which your much admired Lion-Heart was

the hero, was not inspired by the least semblance of a religious motive. The conquest of Egypt was the real object of the third crusade, and the so-called Pilgrims of the Cross were bent on political conquest, or roving forays, or, as in the case of my lovesick ancestor, a desire for military glory.

"My learned friend, no doubt, knows very well that the third crusade ended in failure," continued the duke, with a wave of his hand in the direction of Marjorie; "nevertheless, the object for which Sir Godfrey and Sir Otto had set out for the Holy Land was gained, for both had won that glory they had sought. For his faithful service Sir Otto had been given this little duchy of Cohentz, and both suitors were prepared to enlist upon another crusade, this time upon the heart of the proud Rosabel.

"And now, may it please you, mesdames, we will ascend the watch-tower, from which, no doubt, Rosabel looked forth daily, in hopes of beholding those pilgrims as they were 'hastening home from the war.'"

As soon as they had climbed the narrow staircase that led to the tower, Marjorie went to the parapet and therefrom surveyed a great stretch of country. No such sight as the fair Rosabel might have seen, no knights with glittering lances, no troubadours or pilgrims met her eye, but far away on a hardly discernible road that wound around a mountain she plainly beheld a number of modern horsemen.

At her excited exclamation Duke Otto and Belinda also ran to the parapet.

CHAPTER XXIII

AUNT BELINDA was the first to speak. "Quick!" she said, seizing the duke by the arm. "They are government troops in search of Your Grace."

"Very likely, mademoiselle," he answered, lightly, "but it will be a long day ere they succeed in their quest. But, ladies, I fear we must descend at once. You will be unmolested in your apartments, save perhaps a moment's inspection of them by an officer. As for me, I must find Von Orfmann."

The ascent from the ground floor to this, the topmost pinnacle of the castle, even with rests at all interesting points, had been sufficiently long, but the descent seemed interminable.

"It is thought in Marll that you have crossed the frontier into France," said Belinda to the duke. "Oh, why did you not do so?"

"'QUICK, THEY ARE GOVERNMENT TROOPS.'"

"Pray, mademoiselle, do not concern yourself for a moment," he implored. "If the hussars enter the castle except under the escort of my men, they will too surely be entrapped in the blind alleys and made prisoners. As for me, who know every turn and every winding, I can evade them with the utmost ease."

"Will the castle be besieged?" called out Marjorie, who was clattering down the stairs in advance.

"No, no, no, little mademoiselle; you are not in the least danger, I assure you," he answered.

"*We* are in no danger," cried Belinda. "Our errand here is known, nor is it supposed that we are in sympathy with you. It is you alone who are in any danger."

Much to Marjorie's disgust she was forced to retreat with Mis' Pond and her Aunt Belinda to a part of the castle where nothing could be known as to the manœuvres below, except, perhaps, such as might be performed in the court-yard, a view of which was to be had by

standing on a dower-chest under one of the loop-holes.

From this point of observation she soon saw the horsemen gallop into the court-yard. They were a detachment of the queen's hussars, whose uniform she had learned to know when she was at the palace.

"I should think Duke Otto would have defended the moat," she said, evidently disgusted that the affair was progressing so tamely; "and I do wish he had told us where he meant to hide himself, for it would be so much more interesting. The hussars are dismounting and are coming into the castle. Let us go into the corridor and perhaps we can find out what is going on."

"You are not goin' to do anythin' of the kind," cried Mis' Pond, catching her by the arm. "You are goin' to stay right under my eye every minute until you are with your father. Do you think that we wish to chase over the Continent for you a second time?"

"Why, do you think they would carry me off

by mistake for the duke as they did for the queen?" asked Marjorie, with a gurgling laugh. "Well, if I were not so anxious to see papa I'd be glad to go, for I can't *help* liking Duke Otto."

Having made this assertion she drew back her head and looked from one to the other as if expecting a storm of reproaches. As none were made, she added distressfully: —

"Considering the mean trick he played on papa it seems as if I ought n't to, does n't it?"

Mis' Pond sniffed. "It's our duty to forgive our enemies, I suppose."

Belinda looked away, and made no reply.

Marjorie then went back to the loop-hole, but nothing transpired within her range of vision.

In about an hour after the arrival of the hussars, footsteps were heard in the corridor and an officer with two men, escorted by De Groot, desired the privilege of searching the apartments. This was, of course, accorded them.

"You will not find him whom you seek here," said Miss Belinda, with her dead-doing eyes fixed upon the captain of the detachment. "The government you represent, however, has aided me so much in my errand here that it would ill become me to hinder you in yours."

The officer permitted himself the pleasure of exchanging some conversation with this young girl, expressing first his regret that she had been forced to undertake so disagreeable a journey and also to offer his congratulations that it had been so successful.

When the hussars left the apartment Mis' Pond turned to Belinda: —

"Seems to me you laid yourself out some for that young man," she said.

"Yes," replied Belinda, coolly, "I did."

For a few moments they heard the clatter of heavy boots along the stone floors of the corridors, and in due course of time watched the hussars remount and ride out of the court-yard. The duke was not with them, and De Groot soon appeared with a request from him to descend into the hall.

As they entered this apartment he came hastily forward with his hand outstretched, saying: —

"I could not depart without seeing you again. Yes, mesdames, I am starting at once for France. Ah, to you who live like the flowers, without reproach, how ugly must flight look."

"It looks very interesting and exciting," cried Marjorie, "and I hope with all my heart that you won't be caught."

The duke paid no attention to this kind speech. He seemed conscious only of the presence of Belinda, who, standing in the light of the tapers, was well worth looking at. Her eyes, under sweet, bent brows, burned brightly upon him from the soft whiteness of her face, and for a moment her voice trembled.

"Oh," she said, "the road over the mountains will be dangerous. Why did you come to the castle?"

"It was fate, mademoiselle, fate; but I wish you to know that, whatever the consequence, I shall never regret it."

"You will be in danger at any moment of meeting government troops," she went on. "But there is a safer way. You shall have a seat in our carriage."

"Mademoiselle forgets that her carriage will be searched by the soldiers if, as is likely, she is so unfortunate as to meet any. Besides," he added, in a still lower voice, "I have not yet been forgiven for having shielded myself at your cost."

"Your Grace," interrupted Von Orfmann, now coming forward, "these ladies will pardon a hasty parting."

"Oh," cried Belinda, with a start, "this gentleman will perhaps consider my plan, though you will not."

She then repeated it, forestalling the objection which Duke Otto had made.

"My carriage is not likely to be searched, as I have the promise of the captain of the hussars of two of his men as an escort as far as ——. Beyond that town there is little danger."

Von Orfmann bowed, as Belinda thought, coldly.

"Mademoiselle is as amiable as she is brave. Yet the duke will hardly wish to secure his safety at the hazard of ladies."

"Oh, plenty of men, brave ones, too, have —" but nobody cared at this moment to listen to such a recital as Marjorie had in mind.

"Our risk is hardly worth speaking of, — you know it, monsieur," cried Belinda. "You do not *trust* me." She turned to the duke with heightened color and reproachful eyes. "Can it be true that you also distrust me? By accepting or refusing my help you will answer the question. Duke Otto, will you occupy a seat in my carriage?"

CHAPTER XXIV

WHEN the kindly curtains of night had fallen, Belinda's carriage passed out of the castle court-yard into the road. Beyond the moat, at the specified place, they found the hussars awaiting them, who, having inspected the occupants of the carriage, set off toward the frontier.

As they rode in advance, the coachman was forced to accept their pace.

"*Sacramento!*" he cried in his beard (a false one of a ruddy color); "at this rate it will take more than one night to reach ——."

You see that Belinda, as usual, had had her way.

It was a lovely midsummer evening, with a full moon, under which the mountain scenery, though somewhat savage, was very beautiful. Sometimes the road led through deep cuts in the mountains, in which the sound of the

horses' hoofs awoke such a clatter of echoes as made one quake to hear; sometimes through forests so densely canopied as to intercept every beam of light, where the air was dark and cold as in a vault, and those within the carriage, hidden by this thick darkness from each other, would assure themselves by the pressure of their hands that they were still all safe together. To shoot out from these gruesome spots into the moonlit spaces was an immense relief, for here, at least, if an enemy approached, he would not spring upon them unaware.

The ladies seemed disinclined to talk, and soon even Marjorie's chatter died away.

Though somewhat more wild and rough, the journey was so like the one she had made in the royal coach that she was continually in mind of it. But while then she had been solely concerned for the safety of the queen, now she was concerned that the queen's enemy should escape, — to contrive against her another plot, perhaps.

Once, she asked her companions what they supposed Margaretta would think if ever she came to hear how Duke Otto made his escape from Cohentz, but these ladies would never consider the question seriously of Marjorie's friendship for the queen.

"You and I had nothin' to do with it. It's Belinda's job," said Mis' Pond, whose good New England conscience reproached her continually for not forbidding this wild plan, as a faithful duenna should.

"Well, I know I had nothing to do with it, but, oh dear, the queen will never know that," Marjorie went on to bemoan herself. "Besides, I was just as anxious as any one that Duke Otto should come away with us. It's all very well for you, but in me it's perfectly horrid."

The carriage went on and on, the hussars moving before them like dark, lifeless shades in the dark places, with flashing steel in the light of the moon. No one slept.

Twice they met armed men with whom the

guards spoke, who gave a hasty glance into the carriage and let them pass.

And so with great self-gratulation they rode at last into the little town of ——, where their escort left them. A short ride now and they would be over the frontier. They would be in safety.

Though the moon was going down, and it would soon be dark, they set out in the best of spirits. Having progressed a mile or two, their coachman turned around with a laugh:—

"Mademoiselle, we are close upon our journey's end."

"Tra la, tra la," sang Marjorie.

There were no more dark forests or gloomy ravines. The well-worn road lay safe and easy under the good, quiet sky; yet presently Belinda's sharp ears caught an ominous sound far behind them.

"Listen!" she suddenly cried, interrupting an excellent story which the duke was telling.

Their voices died away, and immediately the sound of horsemen was distinctly audible.

Whoever they were, or whatever their errand, the safest course for the little party was in flight, and Duke Otto urged his horses to their utmost speed.

It was a mad race. Under the lash of the whip the horses strained every nerve, the carriage jolted violently over impediments, or slung around the curves of the road with a dizzying force, and still Belinda urged: —

"Faster, faster."

Worn out by the long strain she had been under, Marjorie began to cry, and Mis' Pond to groan, "Oh, why had they left the home of the free to be imprisoned, kidnapped, chased by hussars?" she cried. In moments of such excitement one is not apt to be reasonable.

A couple of miles had been covered when another ominous sound broke upon the ear. It was the rattling of one of the carriage wheels.

Miss Belinda leaned forward and touched the duke's shoulder.

"Do you hear that?" she said.

"It will be impossible to go much farther," he answered, calmly. "Mademoiselle, our journey together must soon end. Let me thank you now while I have time for the kindness that you have shown to me."

He turned and the bright moonlight struck full upon his handsome face. It had never looked more lovable.

"I have not known how to live well, perhaps," the young man went on, "but I think if the time is at hand I shall at least know how to die."

He drew in the horses and the carriage stopped.

"Oh, go on, go on," cried Belinda, wildly. "Go till the wheel drops off."

"Mesdames," he said, firmly, "you must alight. I cannot go on without endangering your lives. Soon the hussars will be here and assist you to get to your destination. No doubt by some means they have learned of my escape, but remember I have your promise that you will not implicate yourself. The

government must never know that I took your coachman's place with your knowledge."

"That is true," said Mis' Pond, who was already on the ground, having gladly embraced the first opportunity to leave the carriage. "You promised."

Belinda hurried Marjorie out of the vehicle, then followed herself.

"Don't give up yet. There is yet a chance to escape," she cried, "but you must hasten, for the horsemen are almost upon us."

They were indeed. At that moment there appeared around the curve in the road a party of men galloping toward them.

The carriage had come to a stop upon an open plain,— with neither trees nor hollows to serve as a covert.

"It seems to me quite useless," said the duke. "I had far rather give myself up here than to make an effort to escape which is so futile as to seem like the desperate action of an unreasoning animal. But you shall choose for me, mademoiselle. You, too, are proud and brave."

Belinda's eyes were wet, but she held her head high.

"Let us stay where we are, Your Grace."

There was nothing to do but to wait.

Duke Otto stood by the horses' heads, the others at his request in a group aside.

"Oh!" groaned Belinda to herself, "after winning over Von Orfmann and the duke, after gaining the help of the captain of the hussars, and passing through all the perils of the mountain passes, to be defeated by a rickety wheel!"

No one spoke as they stood there, breathlessly watching the advancing horsemen. The moon had now slipped below the horizon, and the figures that flew along the road appeared merely as dark shapes from which no knowledge as to their purpose could be gathered.

As they came within hailing distance a voice rang out:—

"Who's there?"

At the sound Marjorie rushed impetuously forward, shouting:—

"It's papa—papa!"

She believed that she had recognized the long-unheard voice, and was not to be restrained.

The behavior of the owner of the voice seemed to prove the correctness of her impression, for he immediately jumped from his horse, and as she dashed up to him caught her in his arms.

As for the rest of her party, they had remained dumb and motionless in their uncertainty as to whether this was a private expedition or whether the government of Avaril had a part in it.

The former supposition was the correct one, and after a parley between the two parties the guides rode on to find such materials as were necessary to repair the carriage.

Immediately they had gone Marjorie burst out: —

" Papa, we have got the duke."

It was no doubt an awkward moment for that nobleman, knowing that the other could be but ill pleased. Both being gentlemen, however, nothing unpleasant then occurred.

The rest of the journey was made without mishap, and by morning they were out of the reach of the government of Avaril.

However the peace was made between Mr. Westbrook and Duke Otto the present writer has never been told. It must have been effected before they left the little French frontier town where they rested a day or two, for they travelled to Paris in the same railway carriage, — a very harmonious and merry party.

And of all the pleasant journeys she could remember Marjorie thought this quite the pleasantest. It was such a joy to her to be again in the company of that dearest and jolliest of chums, — her father. Nor was ever he, or Marjorie either, in higher spirits. The duke would have them go through all those farcical performances of which he had been a silent spectator on their journey to Avaril, and Marjorie must sing each song she sang then, and go through all her absurd repertoire. As for Aunt Belinda, she was so happy that she

quite forgot her anxiety lest Marjorie should become conceited, and even applauded, as did Mis' Pond, who was also in the best spirits, being, oh, so glad to return to the "land of the free," or more especially to that section of it that she called home, where people got up at six in the morning and went to bed at nine in the evening; where one "had dinner at noon" instead of "dining at night," and where one's experiences were altogether of a less agitating character.

The duke made himself wonderfully agreeable to everybody, and his wit shortened the long journey into a mere pleasure trip. He insisted always upon speaking English, his construction and pronunciation of which were so extraordinary as to be the cause of much merriment. His praises of everything American, however, were sometimes quite embarrassing.

"Ah," he would often say, "the accident of birth does not determine who shall hold the reins of government in your country. What an absurdity that is! On the contrary,

they are placed in the hands of him who is fittest to receive them. What is it, monsieur? Ah, well, at least that is the ideal. If Avaril were a republic she would not be forced to choose between the child Margaretta and a man who is born a Bohemian, with no capabilities for the duties of a sovereign, and one, moreover, who has no affection for the country that he would govern. Alas, mademoiselle," he would go on, always turning at this point to Belinda, from whose decisive and emphatic assertions he seemed to derive much comfort, "can it be the duty of such a man to accept this high trust?"

A grave question the charming Belinda always answered in the negative, off-hand.

At every stopping place he left the train to return with an armful of magazines, books, candy, fruit, flowers and trinkets of such kinds as he thought might please the fancy of his travelling companions. But far more winning was the fine courtesy, the deference, the tact, with which he strove to atone for the injury he

had done them. They would have been far more resentful and ill-tempered persons than these with whom our story is concerned who would have held on to a grudge in the face of such conduct.

In truth, the grievance was entirely forgiven, and would have been forgotten also had not the offender constantly reminded them of it by suddenly looking up every now and then in a droll, child-like way to enquire, with shame-faced curiosity, if they had yet forgotten it.

It was now impossible for any one of the Westbrook party to believe the ill reports circulated against this young nobleman, and all but one of them warmly espoused his cause, although he himself was so lukewarm.

Marjorie, however, had not forgotten Margaretta, that little rosebud queen, whose blight lay in the duke's success, and in whose love of her people lay, as it seemed, her greatest claim to the crown of Avaril, for as father, mother, sister and brother were "the people" to Margaretta. The oath she had taken bound her

no more than the unwritten law of her nature, which she had inherited from a long line of self-devoted kings. It was this in Margaretta, were it by "accident of birth" or otherwise, that made her right seem greater than that of Duke Otto.

Strangely enough, as they travelled farther and farther from Avaril, Marjorie thought more and more about Margaretta and her strange experiences in Marll. Again she seemed to see herself in that ugly room in the police station, with the grizzly man snapping his fingers and tiptoeing before her. Again she saw herself standing with the queen's orphans by the cathedral door while Margaretta was led thither to be crowned. How touching had she seemed as she looked with that sweet, baby-maternal smile upon the crowds of people who were to crown her as their sovereign that day. Then she thought of their meeting in the court garden, and of all that wonderful time when she had lived at the palace, the friend and playmate of a queen. And so at

last she fell to thinking of the prophecies of the gipsy: "Troubles and clouds" for dear, loving little Margaretta, and sunshine and happiness for herself. How selfish of her to enjoy the sunshine while Margaretta was left to droop in the shade! And she fell to wondering if the Ottoists would ever succeed in seizing Margaretta and making Duke Otto King of Avaril in her stead.

And now Marjorie's eyes turned to that unconscious gentleman with such entreaty in them that had he not been so occupied with Miss Belinda, in tracing on a map a certain journey he had once taken, or that he wished to take, he certainly would have been moved to enquire what she would have of him.

At all events, he looked so kind, so handsome, so princely, that all at once there flashed into Marjorie's mind a way to settle their rival claims, a way so wise, so easy and so lovely that she was lost in astonishment that it had never been thought of by all the wiseheads that surrounded Margaretta. A way as

old as the hills and twice as natural. To be sure, Duke Otto was fifteen years or more older than Margaretta, but she had seen him when he seemed a very *young* person, and Margaretta had sometimes seemed to Marjorie as quite the *oldest* person she had ever known. Besides, she had not read history for nothing and she knew that disparity in age had not often proved an obstacle to royal marriages.

"Now then," said Marjorie to herself, "if I can only bring this about I shall serve both a good turn. Ah me, what a pity it is that the duke takes everything I say as a joke!"

CHAPTER XXV

THE Westbrooks were to sail from Havre, and Marjorie supposed that the duke would take leave of them in Paris. It was accordingly necessary that she should make such suggestions as she had in her mind as soon as possible. Although this seemed a very simple matter, in reality it proved to be difficult, for she could not broach such a delicate subject before so many persons, and a tête-à-tête was hard to manage in the close quarters of the railway carriage. At last, however, an opportunity presented itself. Her father and Mis' Pond were reading, Aunt Belinda was peacefully asleep, and of his own accord the duke took a place beside her, plainly with the intention of giving her his attention.

"Dear me, this *is* an honor," cried Marjorie, very sarcastically, for she had been much tried all day. "I should be overcome if I did n't know

how it happens." She nodded toward the sleeping figure of her aunt. "I don't wonder you blush, for when *she* is awake you won't look at me any sooner than you would at a dog."

"Oh, I 'm frequently looking at you," protested the other, "and always to find you in a brown study. Yes; and then I turn my eyes away, for I know that I have no chance against some interesting historical acquaintance with whom you are doubtless occupied."

Marjorie's lips took on a fine, disdainful curl, and she was about to make some bitter retort, no doubt, but suddenly changed her mind.

"Ah, yes," she said, slowly nodding her head in assent; "I have been occupied with historical personages (in the plural though, monsieur, always in the plural), historical *pairs*, I might say, like Ferdinand and Isabella, or William and Mary."

"Matrimony then, perhaps, has been the subject of mademoiselle's meditations. Oh, now I should be so pleased to hear your opinions on that interesting topic."

"Would you *really?*" said Marjorie, quite charmed at this turn in the conversation which seemed to lead directly to the point whither she would fain go. "Very well, I 'll tell you. I think," she said, lowering her voice, "I think to marry becomes a man's bounden duty, no matter how disagreeable, the minute he is — er — twenty-eight years old."

"That 's *exactly* my opinion. What a coincidence! Only I should say twenty-*seven* years old. I 'm *not* twenty-eight yet. You made a mistake in counting up from the figures I gave the other day. I 'm twenty-*seven*, and that 's the time, is it, that it becomes a man's bounden duty to marry? Now, what I want to know is, at what age it becomes (no matter how disagreeable) a *woman's* bounden duty to marry?"

"Well, no matter about that. It 's not polite to talk about a lady's age," murmured Marjorie, being taken by surprise.

The duke went on, however, as if he had not heard her: "I suppose somewhere about

twelve years and five days, is it not?" but when, instead of the expected protest, Marjorie, whose mind was of course upon Margaretta, at once assented, he burst out in a fit of laughter. Whereupon the readers laid down their books and the sleeper awoke, and all insisted upon hearing the joke.

"I dislike to hear a child talk like that," said Aunt Belinda, when the duke had repeated Marjorie's remarks. "I wish you would n't encourage her in it."

Marjorie turned a pink ear to the company, and teary eyes to the landscape. If she cried a bit it was partly because they thought her so silly, and partly with vexation at losing this opportunity of speaking privately to the duke.

Yet it proved that at the conclusion of their journey there might be other opportunities, for, instead of going his own way at Paris, the duke went with them to their hotel, declaring that he should remain until they started for Havre.

At this hotel, Miss Belinda and Marjorie

occupied the same room, sleeping in two little beds, side by side. Neither liked this arrangement, for Miss Belinda liked to sleep late, and Marjorie, who woke at an early hour, liked to get up. Then she would rustle about with little scratching, snapping noises, like a canary in its cage, which her aunt said was more disturbing than a brass band.

The first morning after their arrival in Paris, Marjorie woke even earlier than usual. She began to think at once of the task she had set herself. She had now determined not to approach the duke, who was always so discouragingly sportive, but to proceed in a different way.

"Aunt Belinda!" she said, in a loud whisper, leaning toward the other little bed, whereon lay her aunt.

After a moment's incredulous silence, in a louder voice she asked: —

"Aunt Belinda, are you *really* asleep?"

Miss Belinda's eyes had been closed, her breast moving with the gentle regularity of slumber.

"Yes; I am *really* asleep," she answered, without opening her eyes, "and if you know what is good for yourself, you won't wake me. You had better go to sleep, too."

"Oh, I *can't* sleep," cried Marjorie, in a tone of real distress. "I 'm too worked up, but I won't wake you."

To show that she was sincere in this promise she lay down again, but it was with such a sigh as quite spoiled the comfort of her aunt, who presently enquired: —

"What are you worked up about, Marjorie?"

"Oh, about Margaretta," answered Marjorie, promptly. "You have no idea how I love her and pity her, poor little queen."

"It 's not because I 've not been told," observed Miss Belinda, dryly.

"And how can I help worrying about her with all the wicked plots there are to drive her off her throne? I 'm dreadfully fond of Duke Otto, too, and it makes me sick to think of their being such enemies, and so I have

thought up a way to put an end to all the trouble. But you see the duke never listens to me with any respect; there is no use in *my* proposing it to him."

"I have sometimes thought that he does *not* respect you as he should so wise a person," said Aunt Belinda, in a sympathizing tone.

"Well, he respects *you* all right," cried Marjorie, reddening with a sense of being laughed at. "He listens to whatever you say, whether wise or not, and I thought if you were to explain my plan to him, and tell him you approve of it, you know, we might straighten things out."

"And what is this wonderful plan of yours?"

"Why, you see, Aunt Belinda, if the duke and Margaretta should marry they could *both* reign. '*Otto and Margaretta!*' It would sound very well, would n't it? It would unite the interests of Avaril and Cohentz, and both parties ought to be pleased."

In her eagerness, Marjorie had sat up in bed, and her rumpled head was nodding like a mandarin's.

Now Aunt Belinda rose in hers, and for a moment sat pensively hugging her knees.

"Ah," thought Marjorie, "she is thinking it over. I must have made a good impression."

Presently Miss Belinda's face grew pink, and she said, turning her bright eyes upon Marjorie: —

"My dear, unfortunately for your plan, the duke can't marry Margaretta, because he is going to marry *me*."

For a moment Marjorie was dumbfounded; then she said sternly: —

"You have always said that you don't *like* the aristocracy, and here you are going to marry a man of *royal* blood." Then she tearfully added, "Now, of course, Duke Otto will get Margaretta's throne, for you always get what you set out for."

"But suppose I haven't *set out* for Margaretta's throne. Suppose Otto and I prefer to be humble citizens who can go to the North Pole at a moment's notice if we like. Suppose that I am just marrying him, Marjorie

dear, to take him out of the Queen of Avaril's way?"

Marjorie, who had buried her head in the pillows with her last word, now bounded up again, jumped across to her aunt's bed and almost smothered her with kisses.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, releasing her at last but snuggling up beside her and looking up into her face, "what a glorious idea it was. How did you *ever* happen to think of it?"

Miss Belinda laughed. "Well, to tell the truth, although I like to pose as a diplomat, it was really Otto who first thought of it."

Marjorie was silent for a moment, but she evidently did not give the credit of this brilliant thought to the duke, for presently, looking at her aunt with her head very much on one side, which is said to be an attitude of admiration, she burst out:—

"You clever, *clever* creature! You always make people do just what you wish, don't you? However *do* you manage to do it? But, Aunt Belinda, I do hope you will take

him home at once, for if you leave him here, I'm afraid that scheming Von Orfmann will get hold of him again."

Aunt Belinda assured her that she would take no such risk.

So it befell that in a few weeks from this date, when the steamer *Gascoigne* sailed from Havre, the names of the Duke and Duchess of Cohentz, with that of the Westbrooks and Mis' Pond, were on the list of passengers.

It may as well be stated here that this marriage, which was looked upon by some of Miss Belinda's friends with nothing short of horror, and was the occasion of many dismal prophecies, turned out to be an unusually happy one. Belinda made the duke what Marjorie called a very kind and indulgent wife. If that charming lady really managed her husband as she had every one else, she never let him know it, for he always believed that Belinda was of all women the most gracious and lovely. They spent a good deal of their time in travel, but for many years they avoided Avaril and Cohentz.

Before leaving Paris, Marjorie wrote the following letter:—

"My dear Madame,

"I cannot leave this part of the world without a word to you thanking you for the kindness you showed me when 'afflictions sore long time I bore' at the royal palace at Marll.

"I suppose you know how I was captured and carried off on that journey I took with the countess in the queen's coach, for I have been told that an account of it was in all the newspapers in Marll. Who would have thought that your humble correspondent would ever figure so prominently in foreign politics? I hope the countess got home safely to the palace. When last I saw her the blood of the Barnstetters was boiling dreadfully.

"And now, dear Madame, after all that has passed, what do you think of the gipsy queen? Have not the clouds passed for both Queen Margaretta, who now sits upon the throne as securely and comfortably as one can sit on such a precious uncomfortable seat, and for

me, also, who am the happiest girl in the whole world? Aunt Belinda declares that it is quite impossible that a gipsy or any other can foresee the future, but, as for me, I believe in many impossible things; which is to say that I am a weak, superstitious creature.

"Please give my love and duty to the great Boom Boom, and point out to him the fact that he never could have firmly established Margaretta on her throne if I had not come from Biddeford to help him.

"This is what you call *badinage*.

"My papa bids me express for him his deep gratitude to you, dear Madame, for the kindness you have shown his daughter. We hope that some time you will pay a visit to our '*bon oncle Sam*,' in which case papa offers you the hospitality of Westbrook Farm. If you will come we shall do all we can to make you happy. Uncle Otto shall devote himself to make you laugh, which is what you like best, and is also what he is best accomplished in. Aunt Belinda will introduce you to the

élite of Biddeford, where, as Mis' Pond often says, there is as good society as you can find anywhere in the world, — but I forget that you do not know Mis' Pond.

"I enclose a letter which I have written to that sweet Margaretta, very sacred Majesty and Queen of Avaril, which, dear Madame, I leave to your wisdom and goodness to dispose of. If you should think proper to give it to the queen, it will make me very happy.

"And so, with much love and gratitude,

"I remain always your friend,

"MARJORIE."

On a certain farm in Maine a company of persons were assembled for a festival. All the lovely July afternoon pretty young girls in white or faint-hued gowns fluttered over the greensward. The deep blue of the sky was untroubled by a cloud on Marjorie's eighteenth birthday, and the midsummer sun was tempered by a fresh breeze that made tennis and golf enjoyable. Later, dancing was in order, and reels and cotillons in apparently

endless succession were merrily danced to the music of an old-fashioned fiddler, who had called off the same figures for the mothers and grandmothers of the dancers.

At last when the sun had set and the golden green of the grass gave way to the growing dusk, two by two, or in little groups, the company disappeared within a large tent, hung with garlands and bright with colored lanterns.

On a table which stood in the middle of the tent was a vast birthday cake, around which were arranged thirty-six candles, eighteen of them red and as many of white. On either side of it was a huge mould of ice-cream, one in the form of the dragon of Avaril and the other in that of the noble bird which is our own national device. The dragon, it must be confessed, had a somewhat crestfallen and homesick air, while the eagle expressed by its stately attitude, and, in truth, by every detail, the conviction of Mis' Pond, its creator, that America is the finest country in the world.

These masterpieces of the confectioner's art occasioned so much laughter and such a buzzing of tongues that for a moment the ceremonies were delayed, but as it subsided a distinguished looking gentleman in the company took from beside his plate a wineglass filled with a home-brewed wine for which Westbrook Farm was famous, and looked smilingly up and down the table.

This was the renowned Professor Rolsdorf, to give our friend Duke Otto the title which had been conferred upon him in recognition of valuable geographical discoveries that he had made, and his family name, by which he liked best to be known.

He had the air of a man who has found his true place in the world, and the eyes that looked around that merry company were full of the pride of life and happiness.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "let us drink to Margaretta, the good and beautiful Queen of Avaril. May her reign be ever prosperous, and may she long retain the enthusias-

tic love she has so deservedly won in the hearts of her subjects. God bless Queen Margaretta!"

As soon as the toast was drunk, a gentleman on the opposite side of the table, having refilled his glass, jumped up and said, in turn:—

"Ladies and gentlemen, let us drink to her whose birthday we celebrate,—she is entering to-day what is called a woman's kingdom. May her reign, also, be prosperous and happy! Ladies and gentlemen, let us say again, God bless the Queen!"—and this toast was drunk with a heartiness that left no doubt as to the popularity of her in whose honor it had been proposed.

The people of Biddeford had never quite decided whether those toasts, which were drunk at Westbrook Farm at every anniversary of Marjorie's birth, were to be taken seriously or not. The story of Marjorie's adventures in Avaril were considered by many persons, "just Westbrook nonsense," while others main-

tained that the presence of the Duke of Cohentz periodically among them proved them to be facts of actual occurrence.

On this particular birthday the latter belief seemed to be corroborated by a gift that day received by Marjorie, declared to have been sent to her by the Queen of Avaril. This was a necklace of pearls somewhat too costly to have been the gift of any of her other friends.

"Dear Margaretta," Marjorie murmured more than once that day, as with her fingertips she touched the necklace, "I hope she is as happy as I am."

As to this, no one has reason to think otherwise, for, according to report, there is no sovereign in Europe so independent, and at the same time so beloved, as Margaretta of Avaril.

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